

PREDATORS AT CHRISTMAS EDITION

BRITAIN'S BEST-SELLING DIVING MAGAZINE

DIVER

DECEMBER 2015

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THE SCALE OF PREDATION

FOOD-CHAINS BEING WHAT THEY ARE, I think it's fair to say that every life-form predate on some other life-form, animal or vegetable. We humans are at the top of the chain, and in the approaching festive season millions of turkeys will be left in no doubt about that. "If it bleeds, we can kill it," as Arnold Schwarzenegger touchingly put it in the movie *Predator*.

The Christmas period now seems to revolve almost entirely around food and drink, otherwise known as "good cheer", so we decided that predation would make a suitable subject for the December issue of **DIVER**. If this seems a perverted view of good cheer, there are in fact several good reasons for taking "Predators at Christmas" as our theme.

The main one is that Steven Spielberg's *Jaws*, one of the most influential films of the 20th century, was released on an unsuspecting public in the UK 40 years ago this Boxing Day, filling cinemas with screaming and damp seats, and not just from spilt cartons of Kia-Ora.

That set us wondering how the movie affected today's generation of divers when they first got to see it. Were they horrified, traumatised or inspired, and how did it affect their diving careers?

In Paul Rose's case, *Jaws* underlined his desire to sport a shark scar of his own, because – well, you'll have to read these eye-opening recollections.

The intervening years have, we like to think, seen a sea-change in attitudes to sharks. However, I wonder how differently the non-diving public really does regard them deep-down, despite all those enlightening and popular wildlife documentaries.

By the time you read this, one such series will have been entertaining BBC audiences for some weeks – the David Attenborough-narrated *The Hunt*. We're fortunate to have producer Ellen Husain writing in this issue, providing background to an incredible battle off Western Australia between humpback and killer whales, attended by a chorus of sharks. This really is predation in the raw, too visceral for divers to witness at close range.

South African diver Lesley Rochat, *aka* the Shark Warrior, had no qualms about getting naked with 40-plus sharks to help publicise their plight, and she writes about her modelling experience and why she cares so passionately about the animals. On the other side of the lens Alex Mustard, ever practical, tells us how to avoid camera shake should you be lucky enough to find yourself in a cage surrounded by great whites.

While divers are naturally drawn to the apex predators because they make for such spectacular encounters, predation can be a far more subtle affair. Lisa Collins, diving in the Philippines, was at first baffled when she saw shrimps appearing to be absorbed by a starfish. The solution to the mystery proved to be equally unexpected.

Finally, and still on the predators theme, may I mention an outstanding full-length documentary film called *Racing Extinction* due to air on the Discovery Channel this December (see reviews).

You may not see for a while a better summary of humanity and its precarious relationship with other species, particularly the ocean-dwellers – and perhaps it also points the way to a less-desperate future. Season's greetings!

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TO SPORT A SHARK
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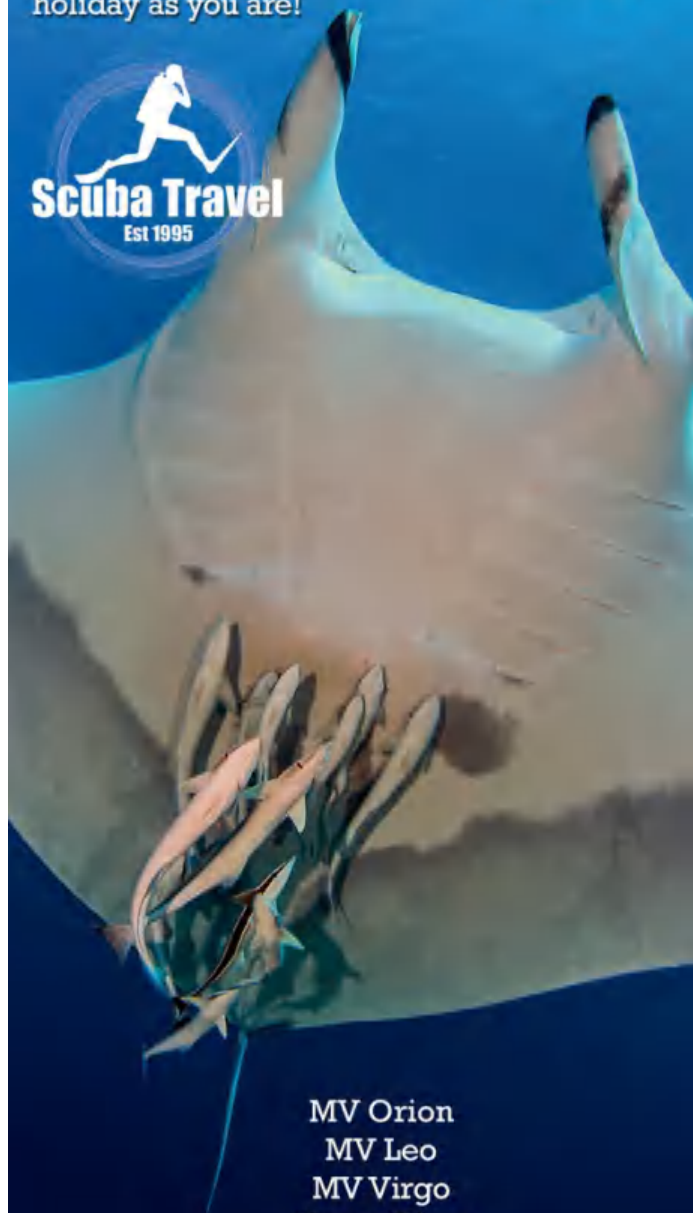


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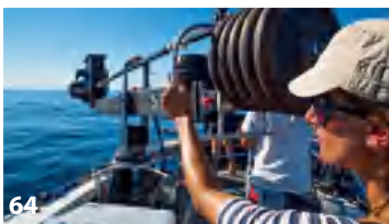
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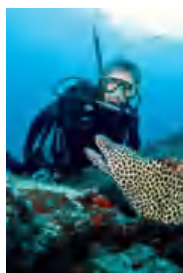
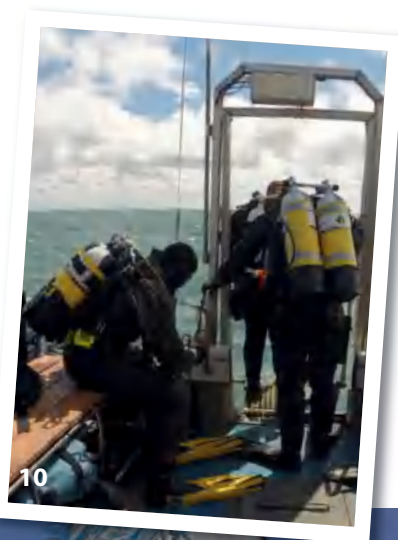
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Cover shot:
Diver with moray
in the Maldives,
by Joss Woolf

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SPAIN HAS BETTER SITES

RICHARD ASPINALL



Each year I buy a subscription to **DIVER** for my friend and dive-buddy as a Christmas present, with the unspoken agreement that when we meet at my place of work, Tamariu, Costa Brava, for our annual get-together, he brings a pile of them with him for my enjoyment!

This year was no exception, and I read with pleasure in the August edition that there was to be an article on the Costa Brava in September (*Bravo Brava*). Unable to wait for my next delivery, I hastily logged on to the online edition, and read the article there.

Working as a Divemaster with my Instructor husband in this most beautiful part of the world, which is so neglected by us Brits when the dive-holiday plans are made, I had really hoped that the article would encourage some more of my countrymen (and women!) to make the trip.

Oh, how I was disappointed! The dive-sites chosen were sadly not the best the area has to offer – Boreas, Hormigas and Estartit.

Oh, how I wish Richard Aspinall had come to visit us in Tamariu, where we have the most beautiful, unspoiled and uncommercial dive-sites on our front doorstep, not to mention a “house reef” 10 foot-scorching steps away from the beachfront dive-base where I can always guarantee to be able to show a diver (their good bouyancy permitting of course) at least one seahorse if not several, in a maximum depth of 15m.

Tamariu, Llafranc, Calella de Palafrugell – we are overflowing with German and of course Spanish divers. Even the French come in their masses, not to mention marine biologists and famous marine photographers, but the Brits are conspicuous by their absence.

This is not a clandestine advertisement for my place of work – honestly! But please, someone from **DIVER** come and stay with us – dive with us and inspire the Blighty brigade to make the journey. Take this as an invitation!

Thank you and your team, however, for the best dive mag in the business – it is legend, especially, and curiously, with divers of other nationalities, who reckon it to be far superior to anything in their own language.

TRACEY PAGE, TAMARIU, SPAIN

Comment: Some dive-destination features, such as Richard Aspinall's trip to the Costa Brava, come about in response to an invitation from a tourist

board, which arranges an itinerary with the participation of dive centres, hotels, airlines etc.

Of course, it is in everyone's interests that the hosts come up with an itinerary that reflects the available diving in the best light, always bearing in mind that unpredictable circumstances such as the weather may intervene – especially on a short trip, as these sometimes are.

For our part we undertake, not to promote the region as such, but to report on the diving as we find it, for better or worse.

Richard Aspinall enjoyed the Costa Brava trip but we are always open to suggestions. Perhaps you would like to talk to the Catalan Tourist Board about arranging a return visit with some different dive-sites?

Anyone seen a bell?

Greetings from Vancouver Island, Canada. Doing some research for our museum, I came across an old article regarding a dive to the Channel wreck U480 on Divernet (*Wreck Tour 138*, September 2010).

The HMCS *Alberni* Museum & Memorial (HAMM) honours not only the Canadians who served on HMCS *Alberni*, but also the crew of U480, the U-boat that sank the corvette in 1944.

For our newly enlarged main site in Comox (we also have a mobile exhibit that travels around Vancouver Island) I want to expand the displays for

both vessel, and to get the word out to anyone who has dived or plans to dive on them to share some of their knowledge. It would be of great benefit to our museum.

In 2011 we were given a wonderful gift of a five-minute edited film of a dive to *Alberni*. Several years ago we assisted History TV in collaboration with National Geographic and another European production company to produce a 45-minute documentary called *Stealth Sub* regarding U480.

For our exhibit in the memorial room that contains plaques naming the crew of both vessels as well as scale models of both, we would like to have some bits and pieces that may have been removed as souvenirs during a dive.

Of particular interest to our visitors would be a small portion of the much asked-about experimental Alberich/rubber coating on the submarine.

I am hoping that someone in the UK can help us to locate the bell from HMCS *Alberni*. It appears that the wreck was never classified as a war grave by the Commonwealth War Graves commission, and has been slowly picked apart over the years, but we have heard rumours that some pub has the bell.

I know how important it would be for the families of both the *Alberni* and U480 to have some sort of items here at the Memorial from each wreck to complete the cycle of remembrance.

So if any diver has a souvenir of either wreck they could part with, our Memorial would be a great new home for it. And, of course, if ever we could find out who has the *Alberni*'s bell, we would be truly blessed.

Someday I would also like to have a plaque laid on the wreck in honour of the 59 Canadians who lost their lives that morning of 21 August, 1944.

I can be contacted at mrbarth@alberniproject.org
LEWIS BARTHOLOMEW, FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR, THE ALBERNI PROJECT, COMOX, BC,
CANADA



Insurers maligned

Your editorial *Small Print and Big Loopholes* (First In, October) was, I believe, misleading. It implied that the two cases involved small print and big loopholes, when actually they were simply not covered by either of the insurance policies – that is, travel insurance and the BSAC block TPL (Third Party Liability) policy.

In the first case, based on the *Off-Gassing* letter headed *Gold Insurance – Why?*, the insurer was right to refer the client back to his dive-travel package provider for compensation because it is responsible for non-delivery of the dive-travel package.

The repeated mechanical breakdowns of its vessel were not a personal travel insurance risk covered, and the “*force majeure*” rejection given to the client seems like “passing the buck” back to its client’s travel insurance rather than dealing with its own obligations.

The responsibility to compensate the client for failure of the holiday is a statutory obligation under the 1992 Package Travel, Package Tour, Package Holiday regulations that cover dive and travel packages if they are booked with a UK or EU tour operator.

So it was not a travel insurance issue and I believe the provider of the dive-travel package was responsible for compensating the client fully.

The second case you referenced was that of the diver caught up in the Malta diving deaths (*Support Gathers For Diver Facing Extradition*, News, October).

This was not an insurance issue because no insurance for criminal defence costs was included in the BSAC TPL policy at the time of the deaths.

That is why BSAC finally stepped up effectively to fund the missing benefit from club funds.

The fact that the previously provided criminal defence costs benefit had been withdrawn or had slipped from the BSAC TPL policy at the times these deaths occurred will be a matter of concern to the membership, and cause for review and investigation, no doubt.

I can understand how BSAC would feel obligated to support its member in these circumstances. It has also put some criminal defence costs back into the current block TPL insurance policy.

So it does no service to the true facts of the unfortunate situation to construe that it was caused by insurance “small print and big loopholes”, when clearly that was not the case. These cases are good examples of where these factors were *not* involved.

It might help readers to remind them that they have a 14-day cooling-off period after buying travel insurance to make sure that it does cover their particular needs. If it doesn’t they can claim a full refund, so long as travel has not commenced.

They should also understand the booking conditions from their dive-travel package provider, which contain important contractual obligations on payment, cancellation and provision of compensation if things go wrong on holiday.

UK legislation requires that these are fair contracts and must comply with Regulation by

Statute, Unfair Contract Terms 1977 and Unfair Terms in Consumer Contracts Regulations 1999.

Buying personal travel insurance does not replace the obligation of your dive-travel package provider to compensate you if things go wrong with your package.

Finally, insurance sales are highly regulated in the UK and EU to make sure that we deal with our clients fairly. It’s not common practice for insurers to construct unfair small print or loopholes in their policies to catch people out or to avoid claims. We do our best to provide insurance that meets the needs of divers and that are fair to our customers.

There is also a good and independent Complaint Resolution Process for insurance complaints in the UK if a dispute arises, and it costs the customer nothing to engage with it.

BOB ARCHELL, MD, DIVE MASTER INSURANCE CONSULTANTS, LEIGH-ON-SEA, ESSEX


Steve Weinman comments: I have great respect for Bob Archell’s experience and expertise in dive-

related insurance, and fully accept the points he makes. In fact my editorial was intended not as an attack on insurers but as an observation that in many areas of activity we consumers often fall short in understanding what it is we’re signing up for, because we simply don’t have time to read the terms and conditions.

In the first case our letter-writer still wasn’t sure at the time of writing why he had paid for additional cover on his travel policy.

In the BSAC case, not only were the end-users, the members, surprised that their third-party insurance didn’t cover criminal defence costs, but BSAC itself seemed to have been caught out.

If the heading Small Print and Big Loopholes suggested that I was blaming the insurers I happily withdraw any such suggestion, and apologise for any confusion caused.

My thanks to Bob for his clear and reassuring description of insurance arrangements. In the end, if we don’t read accompanying print, whether it’s big or small, we have only ourselves to blame! 

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The NAS team goes diving.

MARL TOOKE

World War One wrecks project – NAS leads by example...

THE NAUTICAL ARCHAEOLOGY SOCIETY'S

Lost Beneath the Waves 1914-1918 project, under which divers are asked to commemorate the loss of lives at sea from all nations during World War One by diving and recording wrecks from the period, has attracted responses from diving groups around the world.

But the NAS itself managed to string together a fine run of wreck

dives this summer, involving members of its own club, Nautical Archaeology SAC, and divers from Portsmouth (East) Royal Navy SAC.

Concentrating on WW1 wrecks in an area east of the Isle of Wight where there is a wide variety of wreck sites, teams made up from 11 divers spent more than 30 hours over three days on four merchantmen, a Royal Navy destroyer and a German submarine.

The vessels were the *Camswan*, *Kurland*, *Camberwell* and *Luis*, all lost in the last two years of the war; HMS *Velox*, lost in 1915; and *UB21* which, though lost post-war in 1920 (while under tow), was regarded as an important wreck to chronicle because it was one of the most successful WW1 German submarines, with 33 ships sunk, four captured and one damaged.

The selection of wrecks was chosen "to provide a variety of vessel type, depth and conditions" while, in accordance with "the spirit of the project", the divers conducted remembrance rituals and operated in a fashion respectful to the dead.

"All the divers enjoyed the experience and provided images, video and written reports on the

condition of the vessels for the historical record," said the NAS.

The merchant ships had survived "surprisingly well" and the divers recorded carefully details of their boilers, engines and cargoes, including "glass bottles, mule- and horse-shoes, rifles (boxed), anti-personnel shells and general munitions".

Information gathered from the dives has been collated both for the Lost Beneath the Waves 1914-1918 project database and for a submission to the British Sub-Aqua Jubilee Trust, which administers the annual Duke of Edinburgh's Prize for the British Sub-Aqua Club.

A grant to help the divers cover their costs was received from the British Sub Aqua Jubilee Trust. www.nauticalarchaeologysociety

STU HUGHES

Bottle from the *Camberwell*.

SARA HASAN

Lead balls from cargo of anti-personnel shells aboard the *Luis*.Anchor ring on the *Kurland*.

STU HUGHES



The Chirripo.

...as imagers target WW1 wrecks in deeper waters

A RESEARCH TEAM, drawn from many academic bodies and led by Dr Ruth Plets of Ulster University's School of Environmental Sciences, has captured highly detailed multi-beam sonar images of three WW1 casualties in the Irish Sea, using the vessel *Celtic Voyager*, of Ireland's Marine Institute.

They were the merchantman *Chirripo*, sunk in 1917 off Blackhead, Northern Ireland; the merchantman *Polwell*, sunk in 1918 off Lambay Island, County Dublin; and the Royal Mail ship *Leinster*, sunk also in 1918 off Howth Head, near Dublin.

"We were able to capture the

most detailed images of the entirety of the wrecks ever," said Dr Plets.

"Some of the wrecks, which are too deep to be dived on, have not been seen in 100 years. So this is the first time we can examine what has happened to them, during sinking and in the intervening 100 years, and try to predict their future preservation state."

The images captured will be used to create 3D models, there being "so much data it will take us many months, if not years, to work it all up". The project was carried out to coincide with WW1 centenary commemorations. ■



The Leinster.

THE BIG QUESTION

Shedding the dive-gear

"Scuba-divers: are you also a freediver, or do you have plans to train as one?" That's what we asked you last month, prompted by anecdotal reports of an upsurge in interest among scuba-divers at trying their hand at breath-hold at some level.

There can be many reasons for taking an interest – no weighty gear to cart around, improvements in personal air consumption, efficiency when swimming with big animals when scuba is proscribed, fitness and so on. We're not sure whether 16% represents an upsurge of interest or not, but that was the number of you who replied "yes". A number of you had plans – but few of you were actual freedivers yet.

YES

"Freediving as in snorkelling for fitness not extreme depth." Michael Garnett

"Have done some training. Plan to continue to certification at some point." James Sheward

"Planning to train." Karli Montgomery

"I did a basic course to see if it would improve my air consumption, being a bit of a gas-guzzler. It seemed to help, so now I'm going to take it further with a workshop abroad." Martin Riley

"Whenever I go snorkelling in any depth of water with a like-minded buddy we have a go at practising our breath-hold diving." Margie Boone

NO

"Not at present but would like to learn - it should complement scuba skills." Alastair McCulloch

"Would like to learn breathing techniques to extend my dive-time." Lee Wyatt

"No chance – I like air on my back." Debbie Evans

"I don't have enough time to dive, let alone freedive." Timothy Joicey

"Some interest but no plans." Gillian Griffin

"Used to breath-hold while playing Octopush but I haven't tried freediving." Paul Biggin

"I'd like to learn more about the techniques involved." John Cannon

"I prefer being able to have a good mooch around while I'm under water!" Jonathan Webb

"I like to stay down for a decent length of time. With air." Duncan Raynor

"I might think about it to improve air consumption if I had more time." Richard Marsden

"The plan is stay down with the fishies as long as possible. Take a slice of atmosphere with you!" Ken Ruiz

"My partner freedives but I like the comfort of a cylinder." Emma Lane

"No and no! But I admire the people who can freedive." John Williams

"Fascinated by freediving but too scared to try it!" Stuart Wallace

"I like to have the time to use my camera on a dive." Ann Diaz

"If the Lord had intended us to freedive, he wouldn't have given us the regulator!" Frankie Chambers

Go to www.divernet.com to answer the next Big Question and you could win a £118 Luxfer 3-litre compact emergency pony cylinder from Sea & Sea. More on Luxfer cylinders at www.dive-team.com. Latest winner is Maria Mason.



THE NEXT BIG QUESTION

Do you think most divers are honest when it comes to medical self-certification?

Answer yes or no, and feel free to comment

Finds could originate from Civil War wreck

AN ISLES OF SCILLY diver and wrecks investigator has found what he thinks are the remains of a Royalist ship from the 1642-1651 English Civil War.

Todd Stevens, of St Mary's, found the remains very close to shore at Doctors Keys, near the island's main port of Hugh Town, while surveying with a magnetometer.

Revealed so far are a 3.5m-long anchor and three iron guns that Stevens has judged to be two nine-pounders and a four-pounder, indicating, he told **DIVER**, "quite a big vessel". Also found were "a few iron shot".

The finds lie in just 2-4m of water at low spring tides and, based on his experience of such pieces, Stevens thinks that they could well have belonged aboard a frigate of the Civil War era.

The wooden-stocked, angle-crown anchor has "more obtuse arms than anchors of this type from a later date" and "large flukes with a second kick to the arms and rather a thin shank".

"I would place my money on it

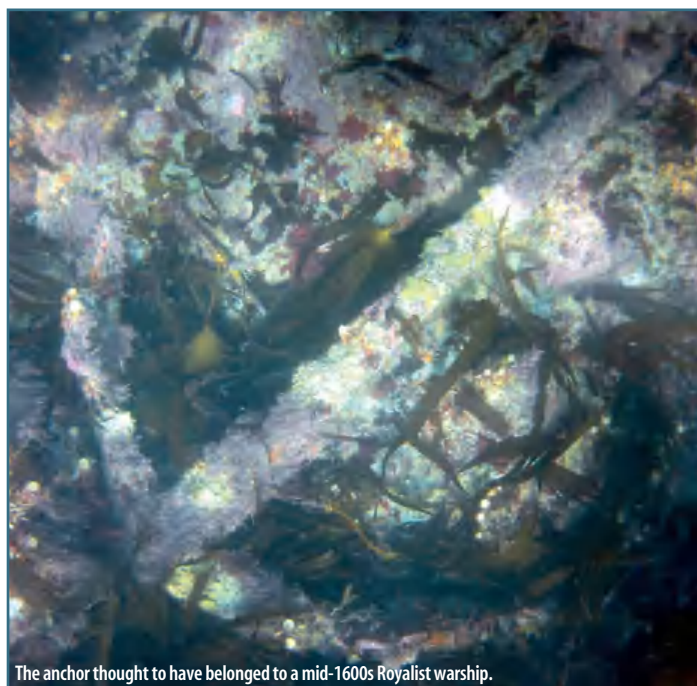
possibly being made on the Continent, where many of the Royalist ships came from, ie Spain, Portugal, France or Holland," said Stevens. "If pushed I'd say it was French."

A number of features placed the cannon also in the mid-1600s. "The guns have hardly any flare to the muzzles, which places them at pre-Georgian, and the trunnions are low down, which is typical of early cannon and pre-Queen Anne," said Stevens.

"The elongated cascabel with a round button places them to after 1600. Basically, the overall shape in general looks typical of the period to me."

Stevens has further magnetometer marks to dive in the area and will return to explore next year. It could be challenging, the area being "thick with boulders" and the current finds having been "buried beneath the rocks in thick kelp".

"After I found the anchor it took me four dives to relocate it to get an accurate GPS, and while searching I found another gun. It's that kind of wreck – anything could turn up," he



The anchor thought to have belonged to a mid-1600s Royalist warship.

TODD STEVENS

said. However, there may not be that much more to find, the likelihood being that the ship was "probably heavily salvaged given the shallow depth of water".

Composition of the finds apart, the position of the wreckage tallies with historical records detailing the

wrecking of two "best Royalist" vessels which had been seen "riding under the Hew Hill", a reference to a historic garrison hill next to Hugh Town at the base of which Doctors Keys lies.

Stevens is the author of several wreck books, listed at www.shipwreckbooks.co.uk

EXTRADITION PROCESS DRAGS ON FOR UK DIVER

THE THREAT OF EXTRADITION

still hangs over a diver who was charged with involuntary homicide by the Maltese authorities over the death of his partner and diving buddy off Gozo in June 2014 (*News*, September and October).

Stephen Martin, 55, from Rustington, West Sussex, remains tagged and has to report to a police station three times a day as well as observe a night-time curfew.

Now backed by a £100,000 BSAC fund, Martin is challenging the order in London's High Court. "The court has granted me leave to appeal the extradition, and my lawyer said this is

great news and half the battle because the judge obviously thinks there is something really wrong with what is happening," Martin told **DIVER**.

Martin has received support from his local MP, Peter Bottomley, who agreed that the charge against him represented a grave over-reaction to a tragic diving accident. Bottomley recently met the Maltese High Commissioner in the company of Martin's solicitor and there had been hope that this might lead to a cessation of proceedings without the need for further recourse to law.

"Sadly I think the hoped-for result has evaporated," said Martin,

explaining that his solicitor had told him that the Maltese Commissioner was not sure what he could do to influence his government, though he had said he would try. As **DIVER** went to press there had been no update.

Accounts by Martin's diving group of the double-fatality incident have now been backed by some other divers. "I recently attended a BSAC Advanced Instructors course and one of the other guys told me that divers from his club were present at [near to] the incident," said Martin.

"They have given me a statement which is now with the solicitor to evaluate its relevance, but they have

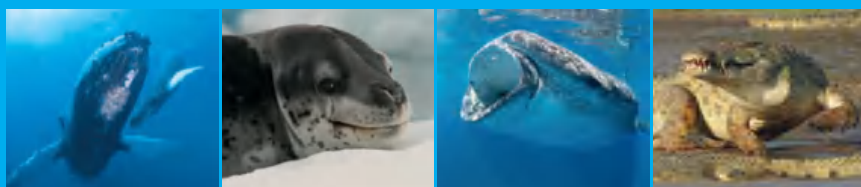
independently confirmed everyone else in our group's statement."

Martin added that "someone.... has been spreading rumours that I am not actually British, clearly trying to undermine my case".

"For the record, I was born on a Royal Navy base in Mtarfa while my father was stationed in Malta in the '60s, and I spent five years in the RAF," he said. "Some service families had children in Singapore, Malaya and even Germany, but we are still British."

Support for Martin now includes a Facebook page, "We Stand with Stephen Martin", run by Jen Kearney, a barrister and BSAC instructor. ■

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The research vessel *Scotia*.



A seep vent.



Corals developing from the nutrients available.



Bacterial mat formed on the seabed.



The survey team.

SURPRISE OFF ROCKALL

SCIENTISTS CONDUCTING a deep-ocean survey off Rockall, Scotland have found evidence of a previously unknown eco-system.

The team, operating from aboard the Marine Alliance for Science and Technology for Scotland's research vessel *Scotia*, on behalf of Marine Scotland, returned to a site where they had found simple seafloor creatures three years ago, to see if they could identify what supported them.

They found evidence of a cold seep, where fluids combined with hydrocarbons such as methane come out of the sea floor and create life based on chemosynthetic bacteria, which consume the hydrocarbons.

Deep-sea seeps are notable for providing the base for food chains without the need for sunlight to initiate life. ■



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Accidental death verdict on trainee

A WOMAN WHO LOST her life after getting into difficulty during a dive at Holborough Lakes, Snodland, Kent in July 2015 was thought to have suffered burst lung as she ascended, an inquest heard recently.

The coroner in Maidstone heard how Vikki Shelley, 33, from Sheerness and described as a model student, was 15 minutes into her third PADI open-water training dive.

She was on the lakebed at 6m and had practised mask removal and replacement when she indicated that she wished to ascend. Rescue diver Rod Potts, who accompanied her to the surface, told the inquest that the ascent became urgent and fast.

At the surface, Shelley said that she felt as though she was having an asthma attack and needed her inhaler.

Although speaking normally when she surfaced, Shelley soon fell unconscious and, by the time she had

been brought ashore, had no pulse.

She was given emergency treatment before being taken to Maidstone Hospital, followed by an airlift to James Paget Hospital in Great Yarmouth where, the next day, it was confirmed that she had died.

Medical expert Dr Ian Sibley-Calder told the inquest that a post mortem had established that Shelley had suffered rupture of blood vessels in her lungs, an injury consistent with failing to exhale sufficiently on ascent.

Gas bubbles had entered her bloodstream and caused a stroke. Shelley's asthma condition had nothing to do with her death, added Dr Sibley-Calder.

The HSE confirmed to the inquest that, after investigation, it had concluded that the incident did not involve any problems with Shelley's equipment or with her training.

The coroner returned a verdict of accidental death. ■

Historic England makes life easier for licensees

HISTORIC ENGLAND (HE) has altered its system of licensing for the licensees of protected wrecks, in what are "the first major revisions to the licensing process since 1973".

The changes have been made to improve working arrangements for licensees and to encourage the next generation of archaeological divers willing to take on the management of protected sites.

The long-standing system of four different types of licence changes to one type of licence "framed by conditions that are relevant to the work taking place", to make the issue of licences more easily "fit for purpose with current archaeological techniques and to reflect the broad range of reasons for which people seek to access protected wreck sites".

To make it easier for licensees to carry out work on a site, they are now termed the Principal Licensee and can name a number of fellow-licensees who are authorised to work on site in the Principal Licensee's absence.

To allow diving to occur at short notice and ease administrative demands, a project licence now only needs to carry the name of the licensee, not those of all the dive team, and licensees can take additional divers on dives without first notifying Historic England.

HE will, however, ask for names of divers who have visited a protected site at various times in the year.

Where a corporate body holds the licence to manage a protected site, it is now possible for any employee of the organisation to run activity at a site on the organisation's behalf, with liability remaining with the organisation.

As **DIVER** went to press, HE was due to release an updated version of its publication *Accessing England's Protected Wreck Sites: Guidance for Divers and Archaeologists*.

Enquiries to Alison James, Maritime Archaeologist, Programmes & Maritime Team, Historic England, 01332 881663, 07770 736095, alison.james@historicengland.org.uk ■

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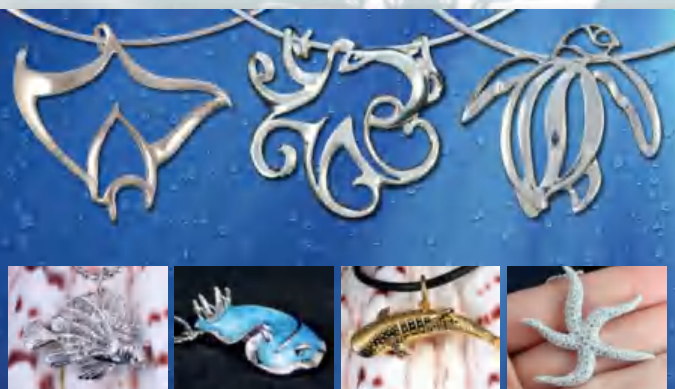
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Two arrested over cruiser wreck finds

TWO MEN WERE ARRESTED in late October in connection with the illegal holding of artefacts raised from a World War One Royal Navy wreck in the Dover Strait.

Kent Police confirmed that artefacts from HMS *Hermes*, sunk in 1914, were recovered during apprehension of the suspects, a 56-year-old man from Winchelsea, East Sussex and a 55-year-old from Teynham, Kent.

Investigations involved the Kent and Sussex police forces, the Maritime & Coastguard Agency (MCA), Marine Management Organisation (MMO), Receiver of Wreck, Historic England and French authorities. As **DIVER** went to press, further details had yet to be released pending any charges to be brought against the men.

HMS *Hermes* was a light cruiser built in 1898. At the outbreak of WW1, she was converted for use as an aircraft ferry and depot vessel.

Torpedoed by a German submarine with the loss of 44 lives, the ship lies upside-down at a depth of 30m.

Finds seized came from HMS *Hermes* as well as other ships including submarines, and examinations by experts are under way to confirm from which wrecks they came.

The men have been remanded on bail until the end of February

The MCA reminds divers that all raised finds should be reported to the Receiver of Wreck, and that any use of lifting-bags to raise artefacts requires a licence from the MMO. ■

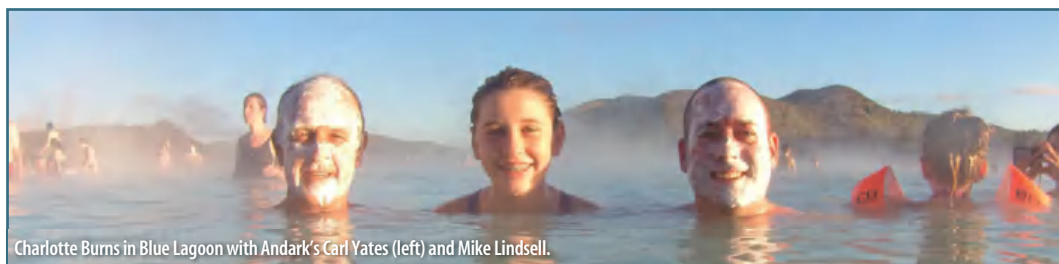
Five-mile trek

A DIVER HAS SPENT nearly four hours walking five miles under water in order to raise money for multiple sclerosis treatment.

In late October Paul Nusinov, 41, made it from Mumbles Head to Swansea West Pier in 3 hours 47 minutes, using a rebreather.

As **DIVER** went to press Nusinov had collected nearly £1600 of his targeted £2000 for South Wales Multiple Sclerosis Therapy Centre and its new build at Winch Wen, Swansea.

To donate, enter his name in the search box at uk.virginmoneygiving.com/giving ■



Charlotte Burns in Blue Lagoon with Andark's Carl Yates (left) and Mike Lindsell.

Young achiever puts the case for youth in diving

A 13-YEAR-OLD British teenager who became a PADI Junior Master Scuba Diver just two days after her 12th birthday – the “the shortest amount of time, to date, for a student to qualify for and achieve that level”, according to PADI – has now campaigned for young divers at governmental level.

Charlotte Burns, from Biggin Hill, Kent, a PADI AmbassaDiver, went to Iceland in September to put her views to government officials in a land where citizens cannot take up scuba-diving until they are 17 years old.

In recognition of her achievements Burns, with sponsorship from PADI Americas and PADI EMEA, had been due to join an expedition to Iceland to dive at Silfra, the freshwater fissure where the American and Eurasian continental plates meet.

With the help of Dive.is, a PADI dive centre based in Reykjavik, Burns was lined up to work with Coventry University and explorer Monty Halls to produce an educational film about the geology of tectonic plates.

Burn had, however, been misadvised that, while training for under-17s was banned, diving by a qualified under-17 visitor was acceptable. The project was shelved, to Burns' disappointment, but a new plan was hatched whereby she would still travel to Iceland to meet government officials and put the case for diving youngsters.

In late September she went over with her father and two instructors from Southampton's Andark Diving, where she had learned to dive – Carl Yates and Mike Lindsell, heads of the

company's sports and commercial dive training arms.

The group met for more than an hour with Sigurbergur Björnsson, head of the Ministry of the Interior; a representative from the Ministry of Transport; and ministers' political and legal advisors.

“The Minister was very nice and said that it was 20 years since they had made the law and now was a good time to review it, that after speaking to me they could see that young people in Iceland could be missing opportunities, and that they wanted

would be a good age with the climate there. In truth I said 10 may be too young; I said 14 to go in open water because of the cold, but in a pool it could be like anywhere else.

“I also said that if it was 14 there could be a lot of young people who could dive in Iceland with their parents, which would be so cool, if they could show a lot of experience in drysuit diving.”

Before departure the Minister “said they wanted to make the right decision, so would be examining all of the facts and speaking with Icelandic dive companies and other people involved in diving there” as well as “talking with other dive organisations in the world, as they wanted to make the right decision”.

“I was very honoured to be invited and to be able to say and explain what I did on behalf of young people around the world who may want to dive there, and for the young people of Iceland who dream of being able to dive,” said Burns.

“They said that it takes time for laws to be changed but I would love to be the first person to dive there if the law was changed – and I would still love to make the film.”

Burns at least got to snorkel at Silfra. “I was so jealous of the divers below me,” she said. “The experience was great but I think as a diver you want to be down there, although I did get to see the beauty of the clear water and tectonic plates.”

She duly completed the rarely administered PADI Tectonic Plate Awareness Distinctive Speciality Course. ■

Interior Minister Sigurbergur Björnsson with a political advisor and Charlotte Burns (right).



to make Iceland diving like that in the rest of the world but make sure that it would be safe,” Burns told **DIVER**.

The group talked about diving in cold countries and about PADI training. “The Minister asked Carl and Mike questions. They could see they were very experienced and were listening to them – it was so nice of them to come with me,” said Burns.

“I think together we were able to show how training and equipment has changed and that kids are able to dive and be safe.

“They asked me what age I thought

HISTORIC PADDLE-STEAMER DIVE-TRAIL WINS AWARD

THE DIVE TRAIL on the *Iona II* protected wreck site off eastern Lundy has won a judges' commendation and a runners-up award from the

Association for Heritage Interpretation.

The AHI's biennial Discover Heritage Awards are unique among British and Irish awards for recognising all kinds of

heritage interpretation. Funded by Historic England, the *Iona II* Dive Trail opened in summer 2014. The paddle-steamer sank in 1864. ■

Loggerheads reach Dorset

TWO LOGGERHEAD TURTLES were spotted close to shore in the autumn off Swanage, Dorset. The creature is rarely seen in British waters.

The sighting was reported to the Marine Conservation Society by Sarah Fargher of Fuzzacker Guided Walks, after the group she was with saw the loggerheads while walking at Durlston Head on 18 October.

Using binoculars, Fargher was clear about what she was seeing as she sized up the turtles' "ochre skin and brown shell". They were judged to be just 50m or so from land and to be up to a metre long.

Loggerheads are the most northerly breeding of all seven turtle species, with populations nearest to the UK being in the Mediterranean, Cape Verde Islands and the south-east USA.

"This is a fantastic record because live loggerhead turtles are rarely spotted in UK seas, but to see two together is incredibly lucky," said Dr Peter Richardson, MCS Head of Biodiversity and Fisheries.

"Juvenile loggerheads spend their



Loggerhead turtle.

first few years swimming at the surface of the open ocean feeding on jellyfish and other creatures, before settling in inshore waters where they use their powerful beaks to eat crabs and other shellfish.

"Usually, young loggerheads thrive in warmer waters, but will stop feeding when sea temperatures drop below about 15°C."

Speaking in October, he added: "South-west inshore surface temperatures are about 15°C at the moment.

"As the seas cool down these turtles

will stop feeding, lose condition and suffer from acute hypothermia.

"If they are lucky, they may strand alive on a beach, and if found in time they can be rescued and rehabilitated back to health with specialist treatment."

Returning any stranded turtle into a cooling northern European sea would, he

said, be "absolutely the wrong thing to do because hypothermic, stranded turtles will certainly perish if they are left in the water".

He urged anyone who finds a turtle on a British shore to "report it immediately" and to stop the tide washing it back into sea before a rescue team can get to the creature.

British turtle strandings should be reported to Marine Environmental Monitoring on 01239 683033 or on regional numbers listed in the UK Turtle Code at www.mcsuk.org/downloads/wildlife/turtlecode.pdf ■

PUSH FOR ST ABBS LIFEBOAT

A CAMPAIGN TO ESTABLISH an independent lifeboat at the popular dive site of St Abbs, Berwickshire has been launched, following the loss of the town's RNLI Atlantic 75 B-class inshore RIB (News, October).

The RNLI's Eyemouth station now covers the St Abbs area but, despite its close proximity, campaigners maintain that, in certain weather conditions, the time to reach a casualty off St Abbs will take about 15 minutes longer – potentially a crucial time-span regarding survivability.

One supporter is diver Marion McFarlane, from Fife, who was rescued within four minutes by the St Abbs boat at the end of May and without which, she says, she does not think she would have lived. www.stabbslifeboat.org.uk.com ■

Big new marine reserves announced

TWO MAJOR MARINE RESERVES have been announced, for waters around New Zealand and Palau, in the Western Pacific.

New Zealand's Kermadec Ocean Sanctuary, starting 1000km north-east of North Island, will cover an area of 620,000sq km, about the size of France. It will take in a number of islands, underwater volcanoes and the 10-km deep Kermadec trench, one of the world's deepest.

Fishing and mining will be banned in the area, in what Prime Minister

John Key has called "one of the most geographically and geologically diverse areas in the world."

New Zealand's coasts and seas were an "important part of our culture, economy and environment and we are committed to managing them sustainably".

Diverse marine life in the region includes varied whale and dolphin species, turtles and many sea-birds.

The US-based Pew Charitable Trusts, which has backed the reserve project, has said that it will increase the percentage of species afforded

protection from 0.5% to 15.5%.

The reserve is expected to be designated during 2016.

Meanwhile Palau has passed legislation to create a 500,000sq km sanctuary, fully protected with fishing and other activities, such as oil-drilling, banned.

Around 20% of the sanctuary will, however, remain usable by relatively small-scale local fishermen.

Approved by the National Congress with a bill passed unanimously, the Palau National Marine Sanctuary Act puts 80% of the country's maritime

territory under protection.

Some 1300 species of fish and 700 species of coral are thought to favour the waters around Palau's hundreds of small islands.

"Creation of this sanctuary conserves one of the most spectacular ocean environments on Earth," said Seth Horstmeier, of Pew Charitable Trusts' Global Ocean Legacy group.

"Today is a historic day for Palau, proving that a small island nation can have a big impact on the ocean," said Tommy E Remengesau Jr, President of Palau. ■

SHARK-FINS SEIZED BEFORE EXPORT

AROUND 3000 ILLEGALLY harvested shark fins were impounded recently by Indonesian police, before they could be exported to meet demand for fin-related products in south-east Asia.

The seized fins came from oceanic whitetip sharks, a species

that the Indonesian government has protected and banned from export.

A government official confirmed to press that the fins had been seized at the airport near Jakarta before they could be flown to Hong Kong, where dealers serve a demand for shark-fin soup.

The soup remains an expensive delicacy despite some inroads made by campaigners to educate citizens about the threat to shark populations from fishing for the lucrative luxury-food market. ■



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Scene-setting in a BSAC branch pod.



Hmm... the New Product Showcase.



Show sponsor John Spencer-Ades of The Scuba Place draws the winner of the Grand Draw prize – an £8000 trip for two to Socorro!



Picking another winner: Martin Edge, Nigel Eaton and Alex Mustard judge the BSOP Prints Competition.



Alex Mustard tries out a Hollis Explorer in the rebreather pool.



Forensic crime-fighters Claire Gwinnett and Laura Walton-Williams.



Well over 16,000 people turned up over two days to help Diver celebrate its 25th Dive Show at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham towards the end of October – and, appropriately, there was an extra-special buzz around the hall...

DIVE 2015 was the



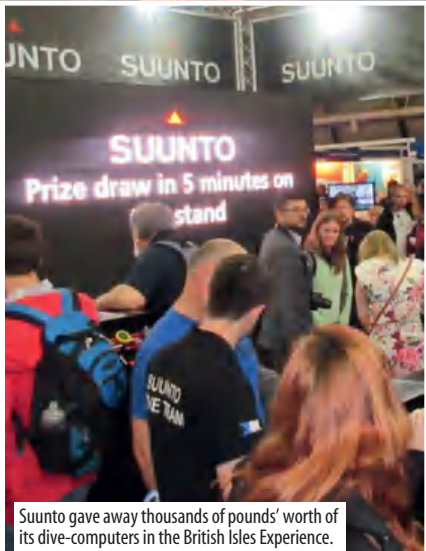
Try-dive.



Steel band? You're in the Caribbean Village.



Fourth Element's hot new Biomap 3D drysuit-fitting service caused a stir.



Suunto gave away thousands of pounds' worth of its dive-computers in the British Isles Experience.



Colourful hose display proves hard to resist.



Full-face gear for the serious diver.



Andy Torbet throws a shape.



Miss Scuba and Paul Rose help out with the Depththerapy draw.



Show with a buzz!



The Try-Dive Pool gets the OK sign.



Gill McDonald and Jane Morgan were among several popular PhotoZone double acts.



Photo Clinicians Nigel Wade and Saeed Rashid.



Louise Trewavas comes clean about diving mistakes.



Suits you.



Mark Powell explains where diver training is going wrong.



And on to the next Show!

THE LONDON INTERNATIONAL DIVE SHOW (LIDS), owned and organised by the **DIVER**

Group, is back at London's ExCeL Centre in February – and with a difference. Now the event will last for three and a half days, from Thursday 11 to Sunday 14, and it takes its place as a full part of the huge festival of outdoor activity visitors enjoy at ExCeL at that time.

This year your ticket provides admission not only to the LIDS hall but to Europe's biggest sport & leisure event – the Telegraph Outdoor Adventure & Travel Show (TOATS), the London Bike Show and the Triathlon Show.

The combined event is expected to attract more than 60,000 visitors.

Unlike last year there will be no partition wall between LIDS and the other shows. We want our visitors to be able to enjoy the whole range of activities going on at ExCeL and, of course, for non-divers to discover the joys of our chosen sport.

The extra days offer you more flexibility in timing your visit.

You'll find all your favourite features at LIDS, from the Diver Stage and the PhotoZone to the PADI and



The London International
DIVE SHOW 2016

Caribbean Villages and the New Product Showcase and British Isles Experience. And expect to find your favourite presenters such as Monty

Halls, Andy Torbet, Paul Rose and Mark Powell in attendance.

The Underwater Photographer of the Year competition (below) and 2015 **DIVER** Awards will be presented in the hall, too.

With so many potential newcomers to diving to accommodate, the Try-Dive Pool will form part of a Discover Scuba Diving area, complete with stage for

presentations to make newcomers to the sport feel welcome and help them to take their interest further.

Of course, there will be more time in which to fit in everybody who wants to get wet!

Tickets providing access to all four exhibitions cost from £14 per day.

★ www.diveshows.co.uk ■

Could you be the next Underwater Photographer of the Year?

THE UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHER of the Year (UPY) competition 2016 is now open for entries, with a deadline of January, 2016.

The winners will be announced on stage at the London International Dive Show on 11-14 February.

The competition will be judged by Martin Edge, Peter Rowlands and Alex Mustard. Major prizes come from Apeks, Fourth Element, Nauticam and Scuba Travel.

The competition is divided into eight categories:

- ★ Wide Angle
- ★ Macro
- ★ Wrecks
- ★ Behaviour
- ★ Up & Coming
- ★ British Waters Wide Angle
- ★ British Waters Macro
- ★ British Waters Compacts

And the competition will make four special awards:

- ★ The Underwater Photographer of the Year
- ★ British Underwater Photographer



Nuno Sá was named Underwater Photographer of the Year 2015 for 50 Tons of Me.

of the Year

- ★ Up & Coming Underwater Photographer of the Year
- ★ Most Promising British Underwater Photographer of the Year

"This is a competition run by photographers for photographers, to give our community the competition it deserves to celebrate excellence in

all branches of underwater photography," says chair of the UPY judges Alex Mustard.

Following the success of the inaugural Underwater Photographer of the Year competition, which immediately established the contest as one of the largest annual events in the diving community's calendar,

UPY 2016 continues with the same format. "We plan to evolve the competition in the coming years, but we were so overwhelmed by the response in year one that it's clear that photographers like what we're doing," says Mustard.

"We've tried to keep entry fees as low as possible, provide prizes that photographers really want to win and to select the winners with a face-to-face judging process you can really believe in.

"We're excited to see this year's entries and find out who will be named Underwater Photographer of the Year and British Underwater Photographer of the Year.

"Remember that the latter title can be awarded to photographers of any nationality who live in the UK, or to British passport-holders living overseas – we know there are a lot of those in the dive industry."

Full details of UPY 2016 can be found at www.underwaterphotographeroftheyear.com ■

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HE COULDN'T BELIEVE HIS EYES

Picture the scene. Topside it's a miserable, gloomy old day with the sea fretful and choppy and grey, and the breakers white against St Abbs Head.

So when you get down to the wreck it's dark and claustrophobic despite the excellent vis, and the broken remnants of the *Glanmire* seem more jumbled and far less intelligible than last time you saw them.

Then, out of the darkness, you see a diver lying on a section of hull. His arms are lifted to his head but he's not moving and no bubbles are coming from his regulator. Your heart starts to thump as you fin closer.

Partly reassured and partly certain it's something serious, you realise there are no bubbles because he's on a rebreather. Then, as you get closer still, you realise with huge relief that his arms are moving.

Then you notice his mask looped over his arm and see that he has taken off his left glove and appears to be trying to pluck out his own left eyeball.

At this point you decide to take the only course open to a rational human being – ask what was going on only once you're both safely back on the boat.

Some time later, all becomes clear.

Our rebreather-using friend had plunged into the briny without a thought except to have a good dive, but when he glanced at the handset of his unit he saw nothing but fuzzy, illegible numbers he couldn't read.

A moment's thought told him why. Like many a short-sighted diver he wears contact lenses and, in common with many an older diver, he's getting a little longer-sighted as he gets older, so his lenses now over-correct his vision and make it hard to read anything closer than 4ft. And his arms are nowhere near that long.

His usual solution is to dive with no contact lens in the left eye, so he benefits from corrected distance vision in his right eye and retains good near vision in his left.

Why this doesn't scramble his brain is unclear, but it doesn't. But today he had forgotten to remove the left contact and simply couldn't read the handset.

The solution? Stop, remove glove, remove mask, remove contact lens, replace mask, clear, replace glove, finish dive.

I bet even PADI doesn't have a speciality for that.

from Mumbles Head to Swansea West Pier in three and three-quarter hours. That's an average speed of 1.33mph, which is very impressive.

Imagine finning continuously for almost four hours and you'll agree, and then be even more impressed when you find out that he used a rebreather, which will have added a lot of extra drag, and navigated by following a compass bearing.

Paul says that the first half-hour was OK, dark enough to need a torch but with dogfish and plants to look at, but after that there was sand, sand and more sand.

The dive was in aid of the South Wales Multiple Sclerosis Therapy Centre, and I'm sure he won't mind if you make a donation.


Vis vision

The vis is something you notice on every dive, especially when it's poor, limited or even non-existent. It usually looks better up to the surface than it does horizontally, and always looks better before you get in than when you're under water, but did you know that there's an approved scientific method for measuring vis?

The Secchi disc has been in use for 150 years. It's a plain white disc 30cm in diameter that's lowered into the water until it disappears, thereby establishing the Secchi depth, the internationally recognised standard for comparing vis.

A variant disc with black and white quarters that's 20cm in diameter is used to do the job in fresh water.

Scientists being scientists are not really happy using lo-tec Victorian technology, even if it is cheap, reliable and so simple that you can delegate it to the students. So there's now a new system based on imaging results from orbital satellites.

The scientists are going all gooey about opportunities to predict climate change by monitoring plankton blooms and similar, but wouldn't it be great if you could check the vis before you got out of bed, let alone drove to the coast? Vis app, anyone? 

Red-faced bounce

At a scenic site somewhere along the St Abbs coastline, divers from Robin Hood Dive Club pitched themselves overboard for a Sunday-morning potter and almost at once found a pair of weight-pouches on the seabed.

They looked new even under water and were laid perfectly side by side, as if they had been placed there very carefully and then abandoned.

Waste not, want not, as they say in Yorkshire, and a DSMB or two soon had the pouches heading upwards for collection by the boat cover. They were indeed new, and each contained a pair of shiny weight blocks.

Being a decent lot, the divers posted pictures of their haul on Facebook. It was shortly reclaimed by a shamefaced young man.

He, bless him, had dropped in for his very first proper dive, plummeted to the seabed, promptly lost one pouch, found himself rolled over by

the now unevenly distributed weight on his BC, lost the second pouch and was soon headed uncontrollably towards the surface.

Total dive time three minutes, but it's three minutes he'll never forget.

He was fine, just a bit embarrassed. Perhaps he shouldn't have been half as embarrassed as whoever did his buddy check. In any case, the Robin Hood boys and girls were left with a nice warm feeling from having done The Right Thing.

Using the head

Thomas Winship is a visionary with an idea, which is essentially a self-contained diving helmet.

The ORB was developed as part of Tom's BA (Hons) course at Staffordshire University and it's a great concept. Imagine replacing all your heavy, cumbersome dive gear with something about the same size and shape as a motorcycle crash-helmet,

and you've pretty much got the idea.

The helmet will feature a built-in rebreather, LED lamps and Bluetooth comms so you can chat to your buddy, and it is intended to work in such a way that ear-clearing becomes a thing of the past.

Add HUD (heads up display) technology and you can even watch movies on deco.

Wonderful except, to be honest, all I can see are problems – basic issues such as where the O₂ supply for the rebreather comes from and where the Sofnolime to absorb the CO₂ goes.

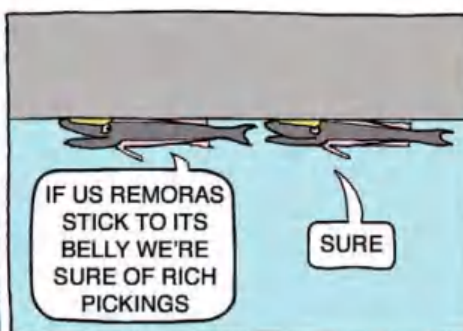
I hope he gets it all to work and I'll happily commit to giving it an open-water trial as soon as it's ready. The world, or at least the scuba-diving bit of it, is waiting!


Five long miles

Five miles is either a very long way or not far at all, depending on how you cover the distance. For scuba-diver Paul Nusinov, it was a very long way.

He recently swam under water

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WHY I DIVED NAKED WITH SHARKS



LESLEY ROCHAT – ‘The Shark Warrior’ – is a passionate conservationist and prepared to go to any lengths to get her message over to the public. Her ‘Ban Drumlins’ campaign was not the first time she had stripped off to attract attention



RATFAELLA SCHLEGEL

I'M BACK IN THE PLACE I love most with the animals I love most, the ocean and sharks. I'm suspended at about 4m in the big blue, three miles off the coast of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa, at the Aliwal Shoal with more than 40 sharks around me.

It's perfect diving conditions today, calm sea and good vis of about 20m. But because I have no mask on I can't see properly, so the sharks are blurry dark shapes moving closely around me. My two dive-buddies are static blurs in the distance.

Now, not only do I have no mask on, but I have no fins on either, and on top of this, I have no air supply. I'm on breath-hold. And I'm not suspended because of perfect buoyancy, but rather because I'm balancing on an unusually large hook with a chain attached to it and a big orange buoy keeping it afloat.

On top of all of this, I'm totally naked! That's right, in summary: I'm naked in the middle of the ocean, holding my breath while hanging on a large hook in a sea full of sharks.

And while all of this is going on, I'm modelling, trying very, very hard to look relaxed so that I can look dead.

Totally insane, you might say, and yes, you might be right, but then again I have jumped out of aircraft (and only ever landed in trees), whitewater-canoeed down rivers (mostly upside-down), rock-climbed sheer vertical walls (with my knees trembling), and run off mountains with my paraglider (total ecstasy, that one!).

But this has nothing to do with my addiction to adventure or adrenaline, and everything to do with the fact that extreme times call for extreme measures.

After all, I am a conservationist driven



MIKE ELLIS

by my passion to make a contribution toward the conservation of our precious oceans. Reaching the masses with important messages, and rallying support that will help drive positive change, is my business, or at least a part of it.

IT'S MORE THAN A YEAR since I did that insane dive. I've done some pretty extreme things for shark conservation, but that campaign called "Get Hooked On Conservation, Ban Drumlines", which I did in partnership with Walter Bernardis of African Watersports, is my most extreme.

Not that I hadn't already stripped naked for sharks in our previous campaign, the anti-shark net "Catches Anything, Kills Everything" campaign, but that shoot was way more challenging.

I was very motivated: in light of the

international outcry by conservationists and scientists against the culling of sharks in Western Australia using drumlines during 2014, we decided to turn the spotlight back home.

Shark-culling is not new in South Africa. The KwaZulu Natal Sharks Board has been using shark-nets and drumlines for decades – up to 600 sharks plus hundreds of other marine life, including turtles, dolphins and whales, are caught by these barbaric killing devices every year.

People from all over the world come to see our sharks, and the loss of large sharks such as the tiger shark is having severe negative impacts on the shark eco-tourism business in KwaZulu Natal.

This senseless slaughter of our marine life is perpetuated by the fears of a public that knows no better.

Through the campaign we aimed to

Pictured: Lesley Rochat practises her breath-hold diving with sharks, but for her publicity shoots she would have to relinquish the mask and fins as well as the bikini.

Left: The poster to advertise the "Ban Drumlines" campaign.

raise public awareness and lobby against the use of drumlines and shark-nets in South Africa, as well as in Australia.

Culling of sharks in South Africa goes way back to when, between 1943 and 1951, there were seven fatal shark bites.

Tourism revenue was threatened and the KwaZulu Natal Sharks Board was "charged with the duty of approving, controlling and initiating measures for safeguarding bathers against shark attacks". Their answer to safe bathing came from Australia, where shark-culling had been in place since 1937.

Similarly, and early in 2014 following the death of seven people within a period of three years, the Western Australian government led by Premier Colin Barnett (known as Cullin Barnett by conservationists) introduced shark-kill zones off parts of the Western Australian coast.



Project Shark with blue o two

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RAFFAELLA SCHLEGEL

Baited drumlines targeting tiger, bull or great white sharks longer than 3m were deployed off Perth metropolitan beaches from January 2014, followed by a similar roll-out in parts of south-west Australia. Sharks caught that were longer than 3m were shot dead, while smaller sharks were released, though many released sharks were severely wounded and also died.

The principle behind the culling was to reduce the threat of shark bites by reducing the number of what they termed “potentially life-threatening sharks” by attracting them to baited hooks, rather than to human activity. The policy was part of a shark cull trial with the intention of continuing the practice annually during peak summer periods.

Culling strategies of this kind originate from more than a half-century ago, when environmental awareness was lacking. It’s not based on scientific evidence nor in the promotion of education and awareness, prerequisites of the 21st century if we have any hope of saving our planet. In most cases political agendas, power, greed and ignorance drive such decisions.

I was very disturbed by what was happening in Australia, but admired the Australians for gathering in mass for public protests against the culling.

Back home my fellow South Africans were very apathetic and accepting of the fact that our sharks were being culled daily, and had been for decades.

A handful of shark conservationists in the area with little power, many of them caught up in “shark politics”, prevented any real movement toward change regarding the shark nets and drumlines.

There was so much attention about what was happening in Australia, and I felt I had to do something to support them but also to make my people wake up and take note that the same thing was happening in their own front yard.

OVERLOOKING FALSE BAY, home of the white shark in Cape Town, I called Walter in Durban and posed the concept: “Let’s take the anti-shark-net awareness campaign we did last year a step further – I go naked on a large hook in protest against the culling of our sharks in Australia and back home!”

Walter, passionate about saving the sharks he knows by name in the area, loved the idea, but finding a drumline hook proved impossible.

No problem. As with our shark net, which we made ourselves, Walter got busy with making a hook, and rallying



Above: Trying to manoeuvre into position on a giant hook with no mask or fins – no easy business.

Below: Swimming with sharks this way seems simple by comparison.

support for the shoot, while I amped up my training. Being physically fit and working on my breath-hold is important for a dive like this, as is being mentally fit, which my training addresses.

Timing was everything. We needed the campaign to launch while the heat was on – another public protest involving thousands of people was being planned in Australia and international support from South Africa would go a long way.

WHEN I GOT TO DURBAN a week later, Walter had done a great job on the hook, and underwater photographer Raffaella Schlegel and Lauren Chiccaro, my safety diver and air supply, were on standby.

The day before the shoot we did a test-dive in a swimming pool, sorting out my weights and other technical issues. We needed to be sure that when we got to the challenging open-sea conditions things would run smoothly.

An early-morning start with promising ocean conditions saw us launch from the Umkomaas river and through the surf, a tricky launch that has a long history of boats overturning.

At the site I slipped into the ocean, 🚫



MIKE ELLIS

naked. It was a strange experience: being naked in general in any situation out of the norm makes one feel very vulnerable. This situation was totally abnormal!

I dangled from the hook as gracefully as possible, strategically covering my nipples and fuzzi, closing my eyes and just hoping the sharks were well-positioned in the shots.

After an hour in the water, and despite one near investigation from a curious shark when I broke the plan of asking for air and instead bolted to the surface for a breath, it was the cold that drove me out, not the sharks.

The end result was a powerful poster campaign, a fast-paced 30-second ad and a five-minute behind-the-scenes video, which I produced. All went viral, successfully raising awareness by reaching millions of people all over the world.

In addition, it secured a live interview across continents on a popular Australian TV chat show, allowing me to support

Right: Pool practice.

Below left: Poster from Lesley's earlier anti-shark netting campaign.

Below: "We need our sharks alive, every one of them."

efforts against the culling.

The power of the people must never be underestimated. Together with the public outcry both locally and internationally, in September 2014 the Western Australian Environmental Protection Authority recommended against the setting of drumlines during the proposed summer months.

Premier Colin Barnett later announced that the state government would no longer pursue its drumline policy. A victory in some ways, but unfortunately the Western Australian government has retained the option to deploy drumlines under certain circumstances under its "imminent threat" policy, which it has exercised since.

MEANWHILE, THOSE WHO CARE

work hard to find alternative non-lethal shark mitigation measures such as the Eco Shark Barrier, which provides ocean-users with a safe swimming enclosure.

In addition, a shark-spotters programme, which we use successfully in Cape Town, is also being considered, as well as elevated lifeguard beach towers, and buoys to detect tagged sharks, which will activate a beach alarm to warn ocean users of any tagged sharks close by. So their battle to save their sharks continues.

Back home my own battle began almost 15 years ago when I satellite-tagged and set a shark named Maxine free from an aquarium after she had spent nine years in captivity as part of a shark conservation programme I designed.

Today I'm still on the same battlefield and my best weapon remains the media. I believe that if we have any hope of saving our natural environment, sharks included, we need to reach the masses

that have the power to help us win the battle. The challenge, however, is that people mostly fear and loathe sharks.

We live in a media-dominated society, however, and by using the very channels and methods that have successfully branded sharks as Nature's outcasts, we can win support to save our sharks.


By promoting a connection between humans and sharks, especially through my own relationship with them, I am also able to educate the general public that sharks are not monster man-eaters.

MY EFFORTS, IF SOMEWHAT bizarre at times, aim to encourage people to see beyond their fear of sharks to seeing their beauty and fragility, to understanding the need to have sharks in our oceans, and thus inspiring them to respect and help protect our sharks.

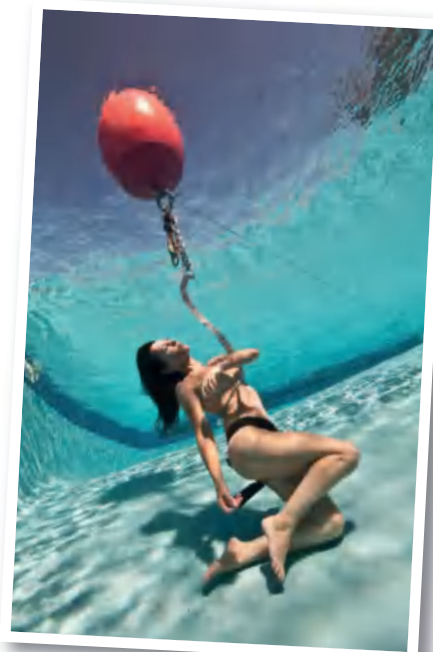
Compelling imagery, still or moving, environmental writing as well as public speaking are my tools in reaching people. We'll need to hand these tools on to the next generation of conservationists, which I do through my internship programmes in conservation photography, writing and film-making.

And when I'm not swimming naked with sharks, I'm teaching gap-year or university students, or leading photographic expeditions and tours in Africa, making documentaries, running AfriOceans, the non-profit organization I founded, or public speaking.

When our sharks die our oceans die, and when our oceans die, we die. So we need our sharks alive, every one of them.

And yes, I am an attention seeker, not for me but for what I believe is worth fighting for, and I'm prepared to do whatever it takes for my cause. 

*** Lesley Rochat is leading a South African Shark Safari in May 2016, www.sharkwarrior.com**



RAFFAELLA SCHLEGEL



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THE LADY IS A TRAMP

Above: This spherical machinery is thought to be an evaporator used for desalinating seawater to cool the engine.

Right: The *Jeanne* afloat in 1914.

IT AMazes ME JUST how far diving equipment technology has evolved. Sometimes, as during long deco hangs, it makes me angry to think that in the “heyday” of technical-diving wreck exploration the kit that we all now take for granted was needed far more, but was simply not available.

How much more might we have discovered or seen, and how much wiser would we have been? Would some of my friends still have been here to tell the tales of adventures we once had?

Or am I just getting old and grumpy? I’m the biggest fan of the equipment I dive with today, and it’s a joy to use it to

return to the wrecks we once were so excited to discover!

Heavily geared up and looking more technical than ever, I have revisited the little-known wreck of a steamship called *Jeanne* near the Channel Islands.

Returning to a deep wreck armed with a closed-circuit rebreather makes it a more exciting experience than when we first dived these wrecks on open circuit.

We arrive on the wreck at a depth of 68m. With buoyancy trimmed to avoid touching down and disturbing any silt, we double-check our electronics and make sure that it’s safe to proceed.

A setpoint of 1.2 has been programmed

on my Evolution and has automatically changed itself on my descent.

My great friend Mark Bullen looks at me and gives the all-OK. We attach a powerful flashing strobe to the anchorline to mark our point of return to the dive-charter.

The water is dark, with little sunlight able to penetrate the midwater plankton fields above. The bottom, however, is gin-clear, and the sheer power of my new lithium Light Monkey torch opens up so much more of the wreck than did the various helmet-mounted Q-lights of a few candlepower back in the day.

Mark is intent on examining certain

THE MERCHANT FLEET AT WAR

IN FEBRUARY 1915 Germany declared the waters around the British Isles a war zone, with merchant ships – Allied and neutral alike – subject to attack.

Alongside publicised sinkings of vessels such as the *Lusitania*, within six months U-boats had sunk almost 480 merchant vessels in home waters.

At the outset of war Britain relied on shipping for much of its food. Its supply backbone consisted of “tramp steamers”, small merchant vessels engaged in worldwide trading, bringing in essential raw materials for industry and exporting coal.

It made sense for the German Navy to try to cut these lifelines using its *unterwasserbooten*.

The campaign fought by German U-boats against Allied trade routes took place largely around the British Isles and in the Mediterranean. At one point Britain was said to have only three weeks of food remaining.

By the end of the first year of war, losses of merchant ships had become critical.

FOR TWO YEARS Britain had no answer to the millions of tons of shipping being lost. The German Empire also relied on imports for food and domestic food production (especially fertiliser) so Britain could only retaliate by eventually imposing its own blockade.

The Royal Navy was superior in numbers and could operate on most of the world's oceans because of the British Empire, whereas the Imperial German Navy surface fleet was mainly restricted to the

German Bight, and used commerce raiders and unrestricted submarine warfare to operate elsewhere.

As the British naval blockade imposed starvation conditions on German citizens, the Kaiser launched his “unrestricted” campaign in February 1917.

The Allies in turn introduced the convoy system, and built dedicated escort vessels to supplement fleet destroyers.

OF THE WARTIME losses to British registered merchant and fishing vessels, more than 80% were due to enemy action. A total of 3781 known such vessels were sunk by the Germans, with 21,886 passengers and crew lost.

Among all nations the U-boats sank almost 5000 ships, a gross tonnage of nearly 13 million.

Many of the victims were never recorded as sunk shipping but simply as captured, damaged, molested or destroyed by the enemy.

Their name, gross tonnage, date, position and method of attack, cause of loss or escape and number of lives were only roughly documented, but much of this information still exists and makes for invaluable reference sources for researching divers.

In August 1919, HM Stationery Office issued two important House of Commons papers – *Navy Losses* and *Merchant Shipping Losses*.

Original editions of both reports are extremely scarce today but are still there for those who need them. One of those records, albeit a short one, is that of the little Danish vessel *Jeanne*.



If it's the little things in life that please us, what about those relatively unknown small shipwrecks in home waters? LEIGH BISHOP returns to one such wreck that despite its anonymity was still part of serious maritime history

parts of the wreck that we missed when we first discovered it years ago. I'm happy to follow and document our progress photographically.

We move off across an obvious cargo hold full of what we know to be esparto grass. It now looks more like a heavy layer of mould on a discarded loaf of bread. Native to Spain and North Africa, this material was used to make ropes, wickerwork and good-quality paper.

There was a time when our first port of call would have been the bow to find the bell and identify the wreck. Today we are examining the midships area, and this makes for an interesting dive because



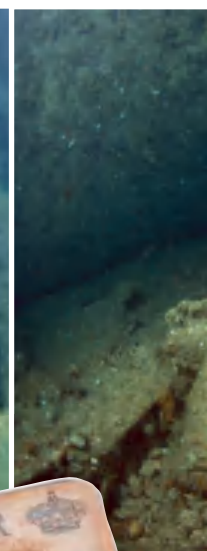


Above: An engine-room telegraph recovered from the wreck after the initial exploration dives by Toby Herbert in 1999.

Above right, centre: Mark Bullen examines the triple-expansion engine.

Right: This Carlsberg ashtray from Denmark was recovered from the wreck by Megan and Steve Clarke in 2010.

Below: Divers prepare to leave Weymouth for the 40-mile trip out to the wreck.



of the variety of machinery on display. Some of this confuses us, if only because of the amount of marine growth that covers everything almost 100 years after the sinking.

Wrecks of WW1 vintage in exposed waters today can look skeletal, and the *Jeanne* is a classic example.

It has collapsed a little more than we remember from early dives but still lies sprawled out in an orderly fashion. From the holds we follow a fallen mast before seeing loose intact portholes, giving us an indication of the bridge area that once was.

A double-ended Scotch boiler is home to a wealth of small fish, and on the port side is what we believe is a donkey engine – a backup for emergencies, or perhaps to start other mechanical features of the ship.

Aft of the engine a large spherical object stands proud of the seabed. We think this is an evaporator, used to desalinate water to cool the triple-expansion engine.

The depth is still 68m and a gas-management and PO₂ check indicates that all is well, so we continue.

From the engine we follow the propshaft to the stern, where we discover a large single propeller with two of its blades missing. We have been moving quite slowly to this point, and I have been

towing a neat little X-Joy Suex, perfect for wreck-diving.

This scooter is another great piece of modern-day technology I could have done with years ago when I explored the big wrecks such as *Britannic* and *Lusitania*.

Mark waits at the prop while I quickly circumnavigate the entire seabed area to a set distance, looking for clues as to what happened to the missing prop-blades.

The seabed is reasonably soft with scatterings of small rock, so I reckon they broke off elsewhere – the prop was probably not rotating when *Jeanne* sank.

THERE ARE LOTS of interesting artefacts to see on steamships that sank during the Great War. In recent years a unique ashtray was found on this wreck. It is clearly a product of Denmark's Carlsberg beer company, but in its centre we can see a swastika emblem.

Jeanne sank in 1916 before the rise of the Nazis. A little detective work here soon illuminates this mystery.

The Nazi party emerged from the German nationalist, racist and populist

Freikorps paramilitary culture, which fought against Communist uprisings in post-WW1 Germany.

Carlsberg was founded in 1847 and the company's logos at the start of the 20th century include elephants (after which some of its beers were named) as well as the swastika, which is an old Indian emblem.

The company stopped using swastika designs in the 1930s because of their emerging association with fascism in neighbouring Germany.

Other artefacts discovered on the *Jeanne* include some interesting pottery and water-filters.

We return to the anchorline to make our decompression ascent. Surfacing to a lovely day, we make out the island of Alderney in the distance, and wait for our charter-boat to pick us up.

It's been a fantastic day's sport, and we have really enjoyed revisiting this old tramp-steamer.

THE WRECK WAS discovered in late 1998 by Weymouth skipper Graham Knott, but it wasn't until September the following year on a return to the site that we actually identified it. I remember that dive as if it was yesterday.

We eventually reached the bow section, which my good friend Jamie Powell had already circumnavigated several times in search of the bell. Some would say that if Jamie can't find a bell others have little hope, but to this day no bell has been recovered from *Jeanne*. However, on





Pictured: At the stern the ships propeller is missing two of its blades.

Above left: Mark examines a set of mooring bollards collapsed from the main deck.



Clockwise from above:

The builder's plate that identified the shipwreck, found by Mark Bullen in 1998; after 100 years windows around the bridge have collapsed with the wheelhouse; this ceramic pot was recovered from the wreck by Megan and Steve Clarke in 2010; a water-filter recovered by Brad Froggat in 1999.

Below: Captain Graham Knott, who discovered the wreck, helps divers back aboard *Wey Chieftain II* with the help of a hydraulic lift.



that visit an equally brilliant discovery was made in the form of the builder's plate with the name *Jeanne* clearly engraved into the brass. Identification POSITIVE!

For 18 men of mixed nationalities, 5 September 1916 had seemed as normal as any wartime day can be.

The Kaiser's "unrestricted" campaign of destruction wouldn't begin for another five months, so in theory *Jeanne* was safe – or she was until a little after midday.

Jeanne was an 1171-ton steamship commanded by Captain G Olsen. She had been built in 1904 by Wood Skinner & Co of Newcastle, but was now owned by a Martin Carl of Copenhagen.

WITH A CARGO of 925 tons of esparto grass *Jeanne* had made her way from Algiers in the Mediterranean through the Straits of Gibraltar and around the Bay of Biscay before making passage eastbound through the English Channel bound for Edinburgh. She was some 19 miles north of Alderney when an unknown U-boat intercepted her.

Olsen's crew were given 10 minutes to gather their belongings while the Germans U-boat crew planted bombs around the ship. The crew abandoned their vessel in one of their own lifeboats


and could only watch as their ship exploded and quickly sank from sight.

Land was barely visible but luck was on the crew's side, because they were later picked up by a passing patrol boat and landed safely in Weymouth.

Jeanne was one of the thousands of vessels that played their own part in the eventual outcome of WW1. She was after all one of the all-important merchant vessels that kept the Allied nations supplied with what they needed in the fight against the enemy.

The *Jeanne* wreck lies SW/NE with her bows to the north-east just off the tide some 29 nautical miles north-west of Cherbourg and almost 40 miles south of Weymouth.

The bow lies on its port side with the starboard side still very much intact and an Admiralty-pattern anchor still housed and standing some 3m off the seabed.

This classic turn-of-the-century steamship makes a fine dive for advanced technical divers with experience in offshore tidal moving waters. 

*** Divers wishing to dive the *Jeanne* or find more information can contact Graham Knott at the Shipwreck Project via theshipwreckproject.com**

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THE

TIM ECOTT

I remember queuing at the Tonic Cinema in Bangor, County Down with my parents. It didn't come to my seaside town until the summer of 1976 and we stood outside in the evening light. There was a sense of occasion.

But, about 20 people away from the box-office, the manager came out and put up the sign saying "House Full". It was the first time I had ever experienced that, and the disappointment was immense.

We went back the next night and, luckily, got in. I can still hear the screams in the darkened auditorium when the head of the dead diver rolled into view as Matt Hooper searched the wreck of Ben Gardner's boat.

The idea that everyone could jump and scream at the same time was immensely exciting. I remember also finding Hooper's character – as a marine biologist – much more interesting than either the obviously heroic Chief Brody or even grizzled Quint the skipper. The idea that someone could make a living studying fish and being on boats was intriguing.

Of course, I started reading everything I could about sharks. As a naturalist my fascination with the sea already existed, but diving and sharks were something new.

Cinematically, and culturally, *Jaws* was a childhood impression that's unbeatably powerful. Few other films of that era have stuck in the memory so vividly, only perhaps *Towering Inferno* and the *Airplane!* series.



WE'RE GONNA NEED A BIGGER FEATURE! That was our rapid conclusion when we started asking well-known divers what effect the film *Jaws*, released in the UK 40 years ago this December, had on them when they first saw it.

Who would have thought that so many of today's intrepid divers and indeed pro-shark campaigners got off to a shaky start as a result of this classic movie?

We will however take this opportunity to at least question a long-standing myth about *Jaws* – that open-water scuba certifications collapsed following the film's release.

PADI tells us that it had already suffered a dip in certifications in 1974, the year before the film came out and when the world was still in the grip of an oil crisis.

Universal released *Jaws* in the USA on 20 June, 1975, and on Boxing Day in the UK. PADI saw a 22.9% increase in worldwide certifications that year, and an 8.76% increase in 1976.

"I've been at PADI for over 20 years and I've heard this myth many times, but I'm afraid it's simply not true," James Stafford Little told us.

"I can however confirm that the release of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* in 1974 meant that people went out less at night!"

However, John Kean, one of our contributors to these pages, contends that growth rates in certifications for 1976 and 1977 were still low compared to previous and later years (not counting the depressed oil-crisis period), "so you could say that growth was down by 50% rather than overall certs being down".

MIRANDA KRESTOVNIKOFF

I remember watching *Jaws* with my brother on a Saturday afternoon on TV when I was a kid. I don't think we realised what we were tuning into.

I forget how old I was but I remember being paralysed with fear and burying my head in a cushion several times. I had never swum in the open ocean and I think it must have put me off for years.

Thankfully since then all that fear and the myths of shark attacks have been dispelled and I just love swimming with sharks, though always with respect.

But the film was so powerful, and however much I know about sharks and their behaviour those *Jaws* images still resonate when a shark gapes and shows its teeth. I just back off a bit, then!



JAWS EFFECT

JOSS WOOLF

I was still a teenager when *Jaws* was first shown in the UK. The film was to have such a profound effect on me that it's a wonder I ever learnt to dive.

I can still recall the fear of getting out of my depth in our own murky waters off Brighton for years to come.

Even when I had already been diving for a while by my late 30s, I remember getting spooked on a night dive in the Red Sea, convinced that *Jaws* was just behind me and, in a moment of utter panic, suddenly swimming like the clappers to get back on board our boat.

But time is a great healer. I also recall, a few years later, actually choosing to do a night dive with sharks on the Great Barrier Reef, just by the light of the moon.

By then the feeling of fear had been replaced by awe and wonder.



JOHN KEAN

Jaws was rated by the censors at a level just above *Snow White & the Seven Dwarves*. They didn't seem to know what to do with a film featuring a big angry fish, so gave it a PG.

After 124 minutes, not only was I scared witless but so were my PGs!

Thankfully, PADI later took precedence over Hollywood and I became a diving professional. It was a great film all right, and thoroughly deserving of its box-office success.

However, as a scuba instructor, I would like to invoice Steven Spielberg for loss of earnings until the Red Sea shark attacks of 2010. It wasn't his fault after that, but his *Jaws* films did more damage to perceptions of our industry than the real thing!



MARIE DAVIES

I watched *Jaws* before I was a diver and it was in the back of my mind every time I swam in the ocean. There again, not many great whites are spotted off the coast of Cornwall! Knowledge is power, of course, and wisdom.

I've been diving for 20 years now but I'd be lying if I didn't say I felt 10% anxious seeing sharks under water. Except perhaps sandtooths or whitetips.

Waiting on the surface to be picked up is another story, especially if you're diving in an area where you know great whites have been seen (for example in Tasmania).

Australian divers have a different view about sharks, however – they want to protect them.



RICHARD PEIRCE

I know that the norm among us shark conservationists is to dislike *Jaws* because of the image it gave sharks and its promotion



of the myth. Nevertheless, I must confess that it is one of my favourite films – I think I have seen it more than 50 times!

MICHAEL SALVAREZZA & CHRISTOPHER WEAVER

We were only teenagers when *Jaws* was released but we were already interested in the underwater world.

The movie didn't frighten us away from the ocean – rather, it stoked our interest to get into the water and see these creatures for ourselves. We really wanted to be Richard Dreyfuss – and not Robert Shaw!"



PAUL ROSE

As a youth, I always fancied a proper shark-attack scar. I reckoned that as I peeled off my shirt and walked the beach the girls would find me irresistible as they swooned at the huge purple zigzag running from neck to nether regions.

In 1975 I'd been diving for six years in UK waters and a year in Lake Michigan, so had no idea what it was like to be close to a shark. *Jaws* scared the pants off me, but I still reckoned I'd take my chances to get the ultimate bird-magnet scar.



SAEED RASHID

I first saw *Jaws* at a school film club when I was about 10, which wasn't the best move on the school's part. Seeing it at that young age traumatised me and many of the other children.

The school ended up calling in parents to apologise for showing the film. I would still go swimming in the sea but wouldn't go out of my depth for many years after that.



John Kean on a 'shark rehabilitation dive' at Stuart Cove in the Bahamas.



MAYA PLASS

I hadn't yet turned double figures when I first saw *Jaws*. It terrified me as, like many others, I didn't know fact from fiction. As years passed education taught me not to be scared but to revere these incredible creatures. That's the power of education.



LESLEY 'SHARK WARRIOR' ROCHAT

In one of my talks as a motivational speaker I talk about conquering fear, given my history of being so scared of sharks that my dive buddies nicknamed me "Shark Bait"!



My fear was so real that I couldn't relax while diving, darting looks around all the time in fear of the monster sneaking up from behind and devouring me. The worst was when my dive-buddies told me of a white shark that was caught and dissected to find a whole 45kg seal in its stomach. In those days I weighed only 45kg, so the nickname stuck!

Given my love of the ocean, however, I decided to conquer this fear and began to do some research (at this stage I had not seen a shark on a dive).

I almost fell off my chair (and more people die from falling off chairs every year than from shark-bites) to discover that my fear had a name, selachophobia or galeophobia, and that many people traced this fear back to watching *Jaws*.

It was then that I had to admit that my fear also stemmed from *Jaws*, which had scared the living daylights out of me, and had become so extreme that I had developed a phobia of sharks.

Jaws did a great job of exacerbating fear of sharks worldwide. It resulted in the senseless slaughter of many sharks, and almost prevented me from being a scuba-diver and dedicated shark conservationist.

I travelled a journey to conquer this fear, but that's another story. I succeeded and now spend my days fighting for sharks' conservation, and putting the fear 99% of people have of them into perspective – basically undoing the harm done by films like *Jaws*.

I have little respect for *Jaws* author Peter Benchley, who turned big-time shark conservationist but not before causing untold damage that still prevails in irresponsible media portrayal of sharks today – and not before he made a shedload of money out of demonising sharks.

ANDY TORBET

Jaws came out just before I was born, and I must have been 12 or 13 before I saw it. By then I'd grown up on Jacques Cousteau and David Attenborough, with sharks portrayed much the same as tigers or wolves – dangerous, but beautiful and magnificent.

When I finally watched *Jaws* I remember loving Chief Brody but thinking the shark stuff was a bit stupid. I "knew" there weren't sharks off Aberdeen (I was wrong, of course) so it had no real effect on my love of the sea.

The film gets blamed a lot for the demonisation of sharks but I think this is a



lazy get-out. We demonised sharks for generations before *Jaws*. It's ignorance, not a film, that was the problem.

LISA COLLINS

I was only 10 when *Jaws* was released and remember my older brother Andy teasing me because he was allowed to watch it, whereas I was too young. He then proceeded to tell me all the gory details in Technicolor detail. Of course, I really wanted to see it.



When I did, eventually, several years later, I remember thinking: "Stupid people! Why would they go in the water with a dangerous shark... they're only provoking it more!" I didn't feel any fear of the shark, only curiosity. I was actually quite sad when it was killed at the end.

RICHARD ASPINALL

I was quite young when *Jaws* came out but I remember the first time it was shown on TV. I don't think it scared me, but it did set me thinking.



The opening scenes were fascinating. Where was this wonderful world where women took off their clothes and ran into the sea? It certainly wasn't the Yorkshire coastline where I had my holidays.

The "shark eating people" scenes weren't that scary to me, but I found fascinating the concept of an animal that preyed on people. Why was just the one fish doing this? Why didn't all of them do it?

I also remember the scene when they cut a shark open and all manner of rubbish fell out of its stomach, including a car licence plate, which I thought a little implausible.

I liked the researcher played by Richard Dreyfuss and thought Quint (Robert Shaw) was a nasty piece of work.

I wonder if my preference for the scientific approach rather than the "let's hunt and kill it" idea was formative – I did end up studying ecology, after all.

I also remember thinking, would a cylinder really cause that much damage when hit by a rifle bullet? More plausible than the shark biting through a power cable in *Jaws 2* and flames popping out of its eye-

sockets perhaps. I'm sure any shark species would avoid an electromagnetic field generated by a cable.

I should have just enjoyed the film for what it was. There was some quite groundbreaking cinematography used, but it never did for me what it did for so many people, who recoil in horror when I tell them about seeing sharks in the wild and say: "Ooh, I saw *Jaws* and that was it for me!"

I understand that Peter Benchley later regretted the damage his book and screenplay had done: "Knowing what I know now, I could never write that book today," he said. "Sharks don't target human beings, and they certainly don't hold grudges."

MICHAEL AW

My then girlfriend dug her nails hard into my arm each time the bloodied open-mouthed monster appeared on screen. The scars remain some 40 years later. I am still in doubt about which was more dreadful.



MIKE WARD

I vividly remember going to see *Jaws* on its original UK release, though the queues were so long I think we spent more time outside the cinema than inside.

I say "we" because it was me and my first girlfriend, so I didn't actually get to watch much of the film until it was shown on telly a few years later.

I do remember the collective gasp of horror throughout the cinema when the head popped out of the wrecked boat, however, and that might be what prompted me to become a wreck-diver, knowing that the man-eating sharks were generally outside the wreck and not inside.

And years later we had a lad in my first dive-club who would yell: "Get three barrels on 'er, she'll not stay down for long with three barrels" in his best Quint voice, given the slightest opportunity.

KEITH HISCOCK

I don't recall any reaction except perhaps "Wow, that is scary!" (but not as scary as being sized-up by two porbeagle sharks under water off Rockall).

WILL APPLEYARD

I must have been 9 or 10 when I first saw *Jaws* and, thinking about it now, I can't quite believe my parents let me watch it at that age!

I used to borrow shark books from the library long before I'd seen the film and



vividly remember gawping endlessly at an image of a diver who'd just had one leg bitten off. So *Jaws* wasn't my introduction to these "man-eaters".

For me as a youngster the film was terrifying, not necessarily because of the (then) gruesome scenes of characters like Quint being devoured by the pesky great white, but more the anticipation of such an event occurring.

Whether it was a result of the film or perhaps those books I didn't much like being out of my depth in the sea, and even had reservations about the deep end of a swimming pool!

Today many consider *Jaws* the catalyst for that "man-eater" reputation. Others would say that it has instilled a lifetime of shark fear into some.

I believe it's a classic film that has its place in history, and as long as we continue to support shark-conservation projects and educate today's youngsters in the right way, we're all heading in the right direction.

ANDREA 'QUEEN OF MANTAS' MARSHALL

The first time I saw *Jaws* I was terrified and fascinated all at the same time. It is such a compelling film that it's hard not to get caught up in the horror of it all, but as a shark-lover I recognised that they were being painted in an unfair light.

I remember feeling a bit helpless and frustrated in conversations with people at the time, particularly my mom, who knew I wanted to study them when I grew up.

Unfortunately the film made all sharks



JOHN 'SHARK BYTES' BANTIN

Seeing *JAWS* scared me to death of course. It taught me that sharks were malicious and undiscerning predators.

I got some pay-off when I was commissioned to shoot a Guinness advert timed with the first TV showing of the movie. I shot the brand toucan's beak breaking the surface in the manner of a shark's dorsal fin.

It wasn't long afterwards that I learned to dive and decided to retreat back to the boat when I saw my first shark – a large nurse shark!

Alas, the boat had sunk at anchor in the meantime, which put the actual dangers of diving very much into perspective for me. Better to be under water with a shark than at the surface with no boat.



international villains overnight and it was a long time before anyone saw them as anything more than man-eating monsters.

A lot has changed over the past 40 years and I'm grateful for more positive media coverage of sharks these days!

BOB HALSTEAD

I thought it an excellent, entertaining movie, more humorous than frightening, and still replay my DVD every year. "Here's to swimmin' with bow-legged women!"



SIMON PRIDMORE

I remember queuing for hours in the rain outside a Cambridge cinema to see *Jaws* on the day it was released. It was a massive event. The hype from the USA had been huge.

As a teenager, did it make me scared of sharks? Not at all. Fascinated by sharks – definitely!



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*'The **cages** are open all day, every day, with divers **swapping** in and out on **rotation**'*

GREAT WHITE SHARK – three simple words that resonate through the oceans and through the diving community. Quite simply this is the most famous fish in the world, and a must-have species for any underwater photographer's portfolio.

Diving with white sharks (experienced divers show off their familiarity by dropping the "great") is very different to other species. With reef sharks, for example, when bait is put in the water they immediately start circling it, nudging the crates.

White sharks really hunt the bait. You won't see them for ages, and then suddenly they appear at speed.

If they fail, they will try again from a different angle. It's exciting, and you have to be ready for the shot.

Second, we almost always photograph them from inside a cage. Yes, people regularly have safe encounters with white sharks outside cages, but what makes these experiences safe is divers giving the sharks their complete attention.

Photography is better when

securely inside the cage because it lets us focus on our images and settings and not have to keep checking behind our backs.

The sharks will also come much closer to a baited cage than they will to free-swimming divers.

Finally, most great white shark dive operators have designed their cages and bait-wrangling to create excellent photographic opportunities.

Although great white sharks are distributed widely in the oceans there are three classic destinations for reliable encounters.

Gaansbaai, near Cape Town, South Africa is the most accessible. The sites are close to shore and white sharks can be seen on day-trips. Sharks are plentiful, but visibility can be limited.

South Australia also has a strong population of sharks, which can be seen most reliably at the Neptune Islands, out of Port Lincoln. This requires a multi-day liveaboard trip.

Visibility is usually decent, and one of the main operators, Rodney Fox Shark Expeditions, has both surface

and seabed cages. The latter, uniquely, provides the chance to photograph sharks with a feeling of habitat.

My favourite photographic destination is Guadalupe Island, in the clear Pacific Ocean waters off Mexico, because it has a large number of sharks and reliably good visibility.

The island is 20 hours' steam offshore, which means a multi-day liveaboard trip. Most operators have surface and mid-water cages.

CAGE-DIVING trips are not like normal dive holidays. We won't usually need fins, BCs, regs or tanks. Most operators use surface-supplied air on hookah regulators. This makes for more space in the cage and means we don't have to worry about our air consumption when the action heats up!

The cages are open all day, every day, with divers swapping in and out on rotation, typically one hour in, one hour out.

A golden rule for successful underwater photography is always to dive and travel with other photographers. These are people who want the same type of diving.

Cage-diving trips are the opposite. It is much better to travel alone and hope that your boat doesn't have too many super-keen photographers. That way, after the first couple of days, there will be much less demand for places in the cage!

White sharks are a temperate species, which means cooler water conditions (somewhere between Red Sea in winter and the English Channel in

Below: I prefer natural portraits of great whites in the ocean to shots of them with mouths open or with the bait. However, in the cage you tend to shoot everything that you see!

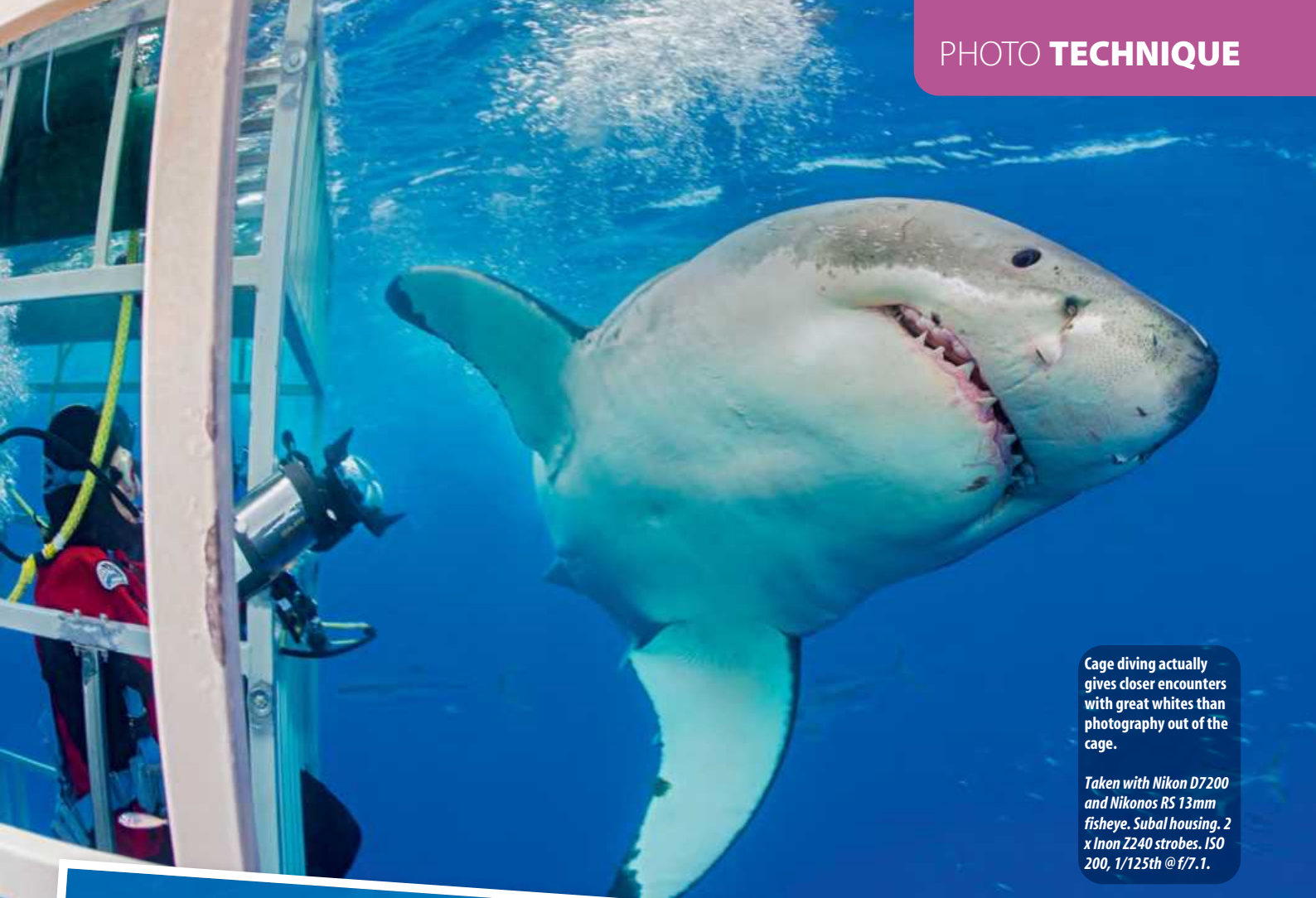
Taken with Nikon D4 and Nikon 20mm. Subal housing. Seacam 150 strobes. ISO 400, 1/250th @ f/8.



STARTER TIP

Despite their reputation, great white sharks are not thrown into a frenzy the moment bait is put in the water. Shark trips customarily involve lots of waiting around for the big boys and girls to show up.

Be patient and get your settings dialled in so that you're ready when the action kicks off.



Cage diving actually gives closer encounters with great whites than photography out of the cage.

Taken with Nikon D7200 and Nikonos RS 13mm fisheye. Subal housing. 2 x Inon Z240 strobes. ISO 200, 1/125th @ f/7.1.



When choosing a spot in the cage, think about how the light will fall on the shark as it passes.

Taken with Nikon D7200 and Nikonos RS 13mm fisheye. Subal housing. 2 x Inon Z240 strobes. ISO 250, 1/320th @ f/9.

summer). I always dress a little on the warm side, so that if the action is good and nobody wants my space I can stay in as long as my bladder lets me!

I always wear lots of weight so that I am stable, especially if there are waves, current or the boat is swinging in the wind (all of which mean lots of water movement in the cage).

Some cage trips are snorkel only, which is a restriction for photography.

Shark cages are always a shared space. Generally everyone picks a spot and stays there for the dive. Pay attention to the position of the sun before getting in and aim for the corner that lets you shoot out with the light behind you.

Watch how the bait-wrangers are moving the bait and predict a good position for shots. That said, the sharks have a habit of turning up where you least expect, and many times the photographer who thinks that they are in the worst position gets the best shots.

The optimum camera set-up for cage diving is a pared-down rig. A big setup

Below: Work with, not against, the others in the cage, leaving room for each other and pointing out sharks that are approaching.

Taken with Nikon D4 and Nikonos RS 13mm fisheye. Subal housing. Seacam 150 strobes. ISO 640, 1/160th @ f/10.

takes up too much space in the cage and is hard to manoeuvre in and out through the bars.

We will always be in the cage, but our camera will usually be outside. The two main ways people shoot are either to lean out of the opening in the cage or to put the camera on the outside and hold it through the bars.

IN LOWER-VISIBILITY situations with surface-mounted cages, you can shoot happily without strobes. This greatly reduces the size of the rig and makes the camera easy to handle, especially if there are waves. However, white sharks are strongly counter-shaded, to camouflage them in natural light, and therefore benefit from a burst of flash.

Use a fast shutter speed to freeze the action, and a relatively open aperture so that the light reaches the subject.

When using strobes in a shark cage I always mount them with just a single strobe-arm on each side, which is easier to squeeze out through the opening than standard double strobe-arms.

I will also favour a smaller dome-port, for the same reason and to save damaging a larger expensive one in the cramped cage.

Although great white sharks are large, we usually don't want to use our widest lenses. Often the sharks do not come close enough to fill the frame of a

ADVANCED TIP

There is a macho fallacy that photographers need to be outside the cage for great images.

This is because that almost every photographer who has been out of the cage is desperate to tell you so. They will show you lots of average pictures of themselves with the sharks, but almost invariably their strongest pictures were taken when they were in the cage!

fish-eye, and when they do, they get tadpoled in the picture (big head, tiny body) by the lens distortion.

Also, it is harder to keep the bait and the cage out of shot with the widest lenses. Better options are a fisheye zoom, a fisheye with a teleconverter or a rectilinear wide-angle zoom.

In bright, clear conditions, autofocus works well, but be prepared to switch to fixed focus if it is struggling.

There is always lots of waiting around with white sharks, so use that time to prepare for the shot. White sharks have a habit of popping up when and where you least expect, so make sure that your exposures are correct and you are ready to shoot.

Work as a team, keeping your eyes open, and communicate to others when a shark is approaching.

MID-WATER TIP

With lots of excited divers and waves washing through the structure of the cage, there are often lots of bubbles in the water. These will stick to our dome-port and ruin our shots, even though we won't notice them at the time. Wipe a hand over your dome periodically to keep it clean.





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TREWAVAS



PANIC STATIONS

WE'RE AT PANIC STATIONS. The skipper is at the helm, giving terse orders. Dangerous Dean is on the stern, waving an orange flare at the rescue helicopter. We've got wingmen, still half-dressed in their drysuits, on both port and starboard.

One person is in charge of the casualty and – this being a technical-diving trip – no fewer than three are looking after the mountains of dive-kit, moving and stacking it with infinite care to clear a space on the deck for the winchman.

A boat is a relatively small space for a panic. That's why "panic stations" is a nautical term. Like everything else on a marine vessel, if you need to do it, there'll be a correct place for it. And being British, we like to observe the proper panic protocol. It would be rude not to.

Under water, no such rules apply. People are left to their own devices and preferences when it comes to throwing an underwater panic.

There are three common-ish signs of panic, though please don't take these as being definitive. Never underestimate the creative abilities of a diver approaching meltdown.

The "3Fs" – flapping, fleeing or flopping – are the most usual signs.

Flappers will do an agitated but ineffective dance, hands flailing, legs cycling. Those who flee will ferociously fight their way to the surface, taking no prisoners if you try to intervene.

The floppers become unresponsive, staring zombie-eyed into middle distance, incapable of helping themselves.

As for me, I can usually be heard uttering at least three Fs when it all goes a bit pear-shaped. But I'm either too busy laughing or just dealing with it to throw a panic. Sometimes being too daft to recognise the extent of the danger can be a positive blessing.

It's easy to say "attitude is everything" until you suddenly start inhaling sea water at depth. At this point you'd happily swap your supercool attitude for anything to breathe and, later, for a change of underwear. But if you're to survive, it's your attitude that will save or scupper you.

The big instructors will say that if you want to avoid panic, be immaculately well-prepared. Know your own kit inside-out. Then just recognise and avoid the almost infinite number of possible risks associated with diving: gases under pressure, boats, oceans, weather conditions, thermal stress, wayward wildlife and bonkers buddies. Simple!

Oh, and make sure that you continuously practise your response to a wide range of emergency scenarios. Easy!

Except that most of us have only a limited amount of time to go diving. Strangely enough, we'd rather be looking at wrecks or fish or gorgeous reefs than constantly ripping off our masks, switching regulators and simulating unconsciousness.

So now the helicopter has come and gone. We relax down from our panic stations. But the lads in charge of the kit are looking agitated as they try to unpick the crates, torches and rebreather parts. "I just can't find it!" cries Crowbar Chris.

"What have you lost? Where did you put it when you came on board?" demands the skipper.

It turns out that the lads' crate of post-dive Red Stripe has been left in the boot of Chris's car. It's unforeseen! No-one has a back-up! Total mayhem erupts.

**BEING BRITISH,
WE LIKE TO
OBSERVE PROPER
PANIC PROTOCOL**

LOUISE TREWAVAS

DEAR SANTA



NIGEL WADE assembles his list of potential Christmas stocking-filler ideas – other similar products may well be available!

It's Christmas, which means it's time to pen those letters to the chubby guy with the white beard dressed all in red (no, not me, I haven't got a beard).

"Dear Santa, I've been very good this year, except when my footie team lost, then I've used

some bad words (it's happened a lot). Would you please pop down my chimney with a sparkly new – " (fill in the blank).

While divers might write to Santa with requests for the latest in rebreather technology, high-end diving computers or the

ultimate drysuit, this is often more in hope than expectation. We're more realistic.

So here are some ideas for stuffing Christmas stockings with bits of kit that won't break the bank – but may fill your diving loved ones with seasonal cheer...



APPAREL

Clothing is the mainstay for those who want to tell the world: "I'm a diver and I'm proud". Here are a few items that should be just the ticket and welcome first thing on Christmas morning:



O'Neill Always Summer Fuse Seam Rashguard

O'Neill's Stitchless Seam Technology uses ultrasonic welding to bond two overlapping panels of stretch fabric, resulting in a seam that lies flat against the skin. The Fuse Seam technology has been used in O'Neill's Always Summer collection of performance-fit UV-protection rashguards, available in both male and female styles from £35.

www.oneill.com



O'Three Beanie

"If you want to get ahead, get a hat." O'Three's smart knitted beanie will keep your bonce warm before and after a dive, and one size fits all.

£9.95. www.othree.co.uk



Fourth Element Ocean Positive Active Swimwear

Fourth Element's OceanPositive range of active swimwear is crafted from premium-quality Lycra fabric made from recycled nylon using marine waste sourced by divers. Prices weren't available as we went to press.

www.fourthelement.com



MacWet Gloves

MacWet gloves feature "all grip, no slip" technology. The gloves have a non-slip material on the palm that performs in both wet and dry environments. Two versions are available, the Micromesh and Climatec, with either long or short cuffs in a choice of colours. These are priced at £27 and £30 respectively.

www.macwet.com

Scubapro Rash T-Flex Guards

These stylish rashguards provide protection when snorkelling or can be used as an extra layer of insulation under a wetsuit. They're breathable, light, quick-drying, antibacterial and provide protection against the wind. They're available in both men's and ladies versions with long (£39) or short (£31) sleeves.

www.scubapro.com



MCS Dolphin Hoodie

The design on the chest of this soft and warm pullover hoodie is inspired by the Marine Conservation Society logo; this dolphin-design winter pattern at £40 demonstrates your support for the MCS year-round.

www.mcsuk.org



Divesangha Little Black Dress (LBD)

The UK-based garment-maker's LBD is *après-dive* wear designed to keep you warm(ish) and to provide some protection from the sun. It costs £120 online, including dry-bag and UK shipping.

www.divesangha.com



TRAVEL AIDS

Travellers invariably have to sacrifice items of kit not deemed essential to meet the airlines' meagre baggage allowances. Here are a few items we're sure holidaying divers will find useful when flying to far-flung diving destinations.

Contigo West Loop Stainless Steel Vacuum Insulated Mug

Conservation-conscious divers wishing to reduce the unwanted waste and disposal of plastic water bottles could use this 470ml West Loop drinking mug as an alternative. The stainless-steel vacuum-insulated technology will keep coffee or tea hot for up to four hours and cold beverages cool for up to 12. There is a choice of eight colours and the price is £30.

www.gocontigo.com



Life Venture Printed Trek Travel Towels

Divers content not to save baggage weight by using hotel towels may enjoy the luxury of taking their own. These SoftFibre towels are printed with flowers (pictured), a world map or country names. They are quick-drying, wickable and can double-up as a cool sarong for the beach. They measure 150 x 100cm and cost £20.

www.lifeventure.com

LifeVenture Luggage Scales

Don't get caught at the airport check-in with overweight baggage – weigh it before you leave home with these nifty hand-held digital scales sold in dive-shops. They're small and light enough to pack, so you can re-check the weight on the return leg, and they cost £15.

www.lifeventure.com





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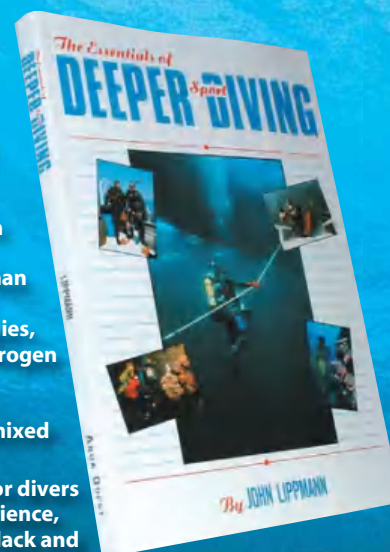


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TIMEPIECES

Dive watches can be regarded as a "badge of office" for divers, subtly letting the world know we're serious about our activity. Here are some ideas for those of you who don't sport your wrist-mounted dive-computers at all times – plus a tide-watching clock for home-waters divers...

Marine Conservation Society Tide Wall Clock

For the UK diver who has everything, this "Mechanimated" tide clock not only tells the time and the number of hours until the next high or low tide, but displays a visual depiction of the tide height within a charming mechanically moving harbour. Every half hour the layers of waves and bobbing boats move up or down within this animated scene. There is also a button to demonstrate a full tide cycle whenever you like. Hand-built in the UK, it costs £360. www.mcsuk.org



Seiko Prospex Dive Watch

This Prospex timepiece from Seiko boasts an automatic movement, stainless case and bracelet with a black Ion coating, a black dial with LumiBrite markers and gold accents. The Prospex has a case diameter of 42mm and is water-resistant to 200m. It costs £379. www.seiko.co.uk



Christopher Ward C60 Trident GMT 600 Watch



This diver's watch features a dual-time calibre ETA 2893-2 automatic movement set within a 42mm diameter 316L marine-grade stainless-steel case. It has a zirconia ceramic unidirectional bezel and is depth-rated to 600m. The watch also features a white Guilloché wave-pattern dial, SuperLuminova indices and embossed alligator-pattern leather strap. Price is £799. www.christopherward.co.uk

Squale 2002 Dive Watch

Italian family watchmaker Squale's 2002 instrument is part of a range of divers' timepieces and uses a Swiss self-winding ETA 2824-2 movement set behind a 3.5mm-thick sapphire crystal face in a 43mm stainless-steel case. Depth-rating is 1000m. Straps are Italian-made rubber with Squale's own deployment and can be matched to the face and bezel colour. The price is £975. www.pageandcooper.com



BACK-UP

Certain hi-tec products might provide a welcome surprise on 25 December for those of us who go diving in isolated spots heavily laden with power-consuming thingamajigs.

G-Drive ATC All-Terrain Portable Hard Drive

G-Technology has a travel-tough external data-storage solution for underwater photographers who download and save data in the field. The G-Drive ev ATC 1TB hard drive is set inside an all-terrain case (ATC) with a tethered Thunderbolt or USB 3.0 cable. The ATC protects against pressure, shock, dust and water. Formatted for Mac, the drive can be reformatted for Windows. Price is £180 and the USB 3.0 version costs £140. www.g-technology.com



Aqua Trek Power Bank & Traveler Solar Battery Chargers

If you find yourself with limited access to mains power while travelling, these handy portable chargers can save the day. The Aqua Trek boasts a 7800mah on-board battery and is charged from a mains USB outlet, PC or car and should hold its charge for months. It's waterproof to 1m and will fit in a pocket. The Traveler Solar model has a capacity of 6000mah, and the same charging options with the addition of a solar-charge panel. Both products will charge 5v devices such as iPhones, iPods, tablets, Kindles and GoPros via USB connections. They're priced at £45 and £40 respectively. www.mobilesolarchargers.co.uk



DIVE ACCESSORIES

For the divers who have everything, here are some suggestions that are safe, sensible and probably not already in your loved one's kit-bag.

Bristol Channel Diving Deco Dive Planning Decals



For technical divers, these traffic-light colour-coded self-adhesive stickers should facilitate best practice in dive-planning for open-circuit technical divers. Dive status can be easily identified with the information recorded in a logical and accessible format, suitable for real-world diving as well as for training scenarios. The labels are sized to fit standard flip slates, are varnished and can be overwritten using a waterproof marker, then wiped clean after use with an acetone-free solution. They cost £3 per sheet. www.bristolchanneldiving.co.uk

TUSA Hyperdry Elite II Snorkel

The SP0101 Hyperdry Elite II is a more refined and streamlined version of TUSA's Hyperdry MAX and combines what the supplier says are all the best features of its snorkels in one. It has a low-profile dry top, an angled purge chamber and an ortho-conscious mouthpiece to help reduce jaw fatigue. There is a choice of eight solid colours and six black models with

colour-contrasting highlights. Expect to pay just under £29. www.tusa.com



Dritek Hanger

Here's a solution to hanging dive-kit in most environments – this hanger is tough and versatile with a large, high-load karabiner, an adjustable strap and super-sized plastic hanger. The material is gentle on fabrics such as neoprene and will take a 30kg load. The strap and karabiner combination adds versatility to the hanging options. Online price is £18.

www.dritekproducts.com



Inspired by technical diving and versatile enough to be used in a range of underwater applications, LifeLine spools have easy-to-grip flared sides to improve deployment and winding. The spools are constructed from tough anodised aluminium alloy with high-visibility Elderlrid line for low light conditions and a tough Dyneema leader and swivel. The spools are available in three colour-coded sizes and come with a 316 stainless boltsnap. Expect to pay £43 for the Purple 15m, £60 for the Green 30m, and £70 for the Blue 45m.

www.apeks.co.uk

Apeks LifeLine Spools



Buddy Watcher Communication System

This German-made diver communication system uses ultrasound technology to establish direct contact between dive buddies. Easily recognised vibration and LED alerts can be transmitted at the push of the call button from as far as 20m away. Sealed batteries are recharged via USB adaptors and wet connections. Let's hope it heralds the end of those annoying rattles and tank clangers in 2016! Price per pair is 240 euros. www.buddy-watcher.de

APD Dual Black DSMBs

Ambient Pressure Diving has used the best colours for diver-location devices for DSMBs that employ black and either fluorescent red or yellow split colouring. The self-sealing DSMBs are available with optional inflation systems. Expect to pay £32 for the standard model, £60 with an Easifil adaptor and £110 with a DIN inflation cylinder. www.apdiving.com



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MY RED SEA **TOP 10** CHALLENGE



Is it possible to see and capture on camera the 10 most coveted photographic subjects in Egyptian waters in the space of a week? **NIGEL WADE** goes to

Sharm el Sheikh to find out, and everything kicks off well...

A T THE DIVE 2014 SHOW in Birmingham, underwater photographer and post-processing guru Saeed Rashid and I presented our “Top 10 Subjects to Photograph in the Red Sea”.

As we counted down our favoured subjects to capture on digital sensors, the Centre Stage area was packed with onlookers keen to find out our number one choice.

Almost all the spectators seemed to agree with our lists, but after the presentation a member of the audience asked me if all 10 subjects could be found and photographed in a single week's diving.

This was a question I couldn't answer at the time, but rather than shy away from the issue I decided to challenge myself and see if I could indeed capture striking images of all 10 subjects during five days of day-boat diving from the Sinai's holiday capital.

Invited to join British-owned and family-operated Elite Diving in Egypt's Sharm el Sheikh, I tested the subject-finding skills of founder Alun Evans and his family crew as I endeavoured to put together a portfolio of images.

I could have captured three or four of the subjects together in one shot, but that would be dishonest, and I'm no cheater. So here's the list, in no particular order...

1 Schools

“I can show you where they are, and we can try to herd them for you to photograph,” said Alun as we prepared to enter the water.

Five minutes later my jaw dropped at the sight of thousands of bohar snapper, hanging motionless in the clear water.

They were here for one reason, to release eggs and sperm during their annual mating aggregation. The shoal was spread over a large swathe of the reef wall.

Alun and his son Gwyn (*aka G*) set to work as only the Welsh know how, slowly but skilfully shepherding the shoal as if



they were sheep on a rain-soaked meadow on the banks of the Taff.

By gently coaxing them from the sides the fish tightened their formation, looking pretty nonplussed at the Welshmen's efforts.

Click, click, click and I had the images I needed, but it wasn't over yet. There were schools of batfish, barracuda and unicorn surgeonfish left to shoot as we continued to hunt the prolific walls of Yolanda and Shark reefs.

Batfish are among my

Clockwise from main picture: The spawning bohar snapper at Shark Reef move as one; 'ta-dah' batfish at the back of Yolanda; unicorn surgeonfish above the wrecked cargo at the same site; striped assassins – the oval school of barracuda.

favourite species. They look so awkward as their profile cuts through the water with those beautiful black-edged dorsal and tail fins, their silvery flanks sporting subtle broad-banded stripes at the shoulder and head, with bright yellow pectoral fins adding a flash of colour.

They can be found in numbers during the mating aggregation, and again Alun delivered the goods as he spread his arms, signalling "ta-dah" at the back of Yolanda reef. I gazed past him to see the batfish busy clouding the water with their mating antics. Preoccupied and oblivious to our presence, they were easy targets.

A few days later and Team Elite came up with more schooling goodies in



the form of an oval shoal of barracuda right on the tip of Yolanda.

The streamlined predators stayed motionless in a current strong enough to make us all rip through the contents of our nitrox tanks, as we finned like maniacs just to stay in touch. I swear I could see them smile, showing off some scary dentistry at our clumsy efforts.

Exhausted but elated, we finished the dive early. I matched the smiling assassins' grin as we climbed the ladder, knowing I had the shots in the bag.

Next on the list were the odd-looking unicorn surgeonfish, their protruding forehead appendages and long trailing tail edges giving them an unmistakable silhouette. We found a shoal nestled comfortably above the famous remains of cargo from the wrecked Cypriot ship the *Yolanda*.

It's wise not to get too close to these fish. The set of modified spines at their tail root is permanently erect and scalpel-sharp (hence "surgeonfish") and these formidable blades have been known to inflict injury as the fish defend themselves from predators.

2 Moray eels

These long, slithering predators are a common sight on Sharm's numerous reefs, but are not that easy to photograph because they spend the daytime tucked away in nooks and crannies, sometimes enjoying the attention of meticulous cleaner wrasse and shrimps as they pick parasites and detritus from the eels.

Egyptian morays are usually large specimens and easy to spot. Alun located



Top: Alun Evans goes head to head with a colossus.

Above: Glassfish and coral pinnacle at Temple.

one on the wall at Shark Reef and decided to pose with his find.

It was like two worlds colliding, as the big former rugby flanker went head to head with this intimidating colossus.

3 Glassfish

Glassfish can be found in and around a reef's coral structures. The tiny fish shoal tightly together for protection from predators such as grouper and coral trout.

The shimmering mass is challenging to photograph, but not to find, as Alun proved when he gave me another "tah" moment just offshore at Temple.

A solid coral pinnacle rose from the sandy seabed to within a few metres of the surface. It was swathed in a silver cloud, ever-moving and changing shape as the tiny fish went about their daily business.

Their flanks reflected the bright sunlight, causing them to flash like sparklers as they turned in unison before retreating to the protection of the coral when threatened.

4 Gorgonians

These large living structures grow and thrive where the current delivers morsels for them to harvest. The seafans filter plankton and particulate matter from the water with their tiny polyp tentacles, and provide a safe haven for smaller species of fish and crustaceans as they make their home among the branching structures.

Heavy diver traffic can have a detrimental effect on these delicate colonies, stray fin-kicks leaving them damaged and split.

Alun and his team told me about a group of pristine fans at Ras Nasrani, and it was here that we found the large orange structures as the boys delivered the goods once again. These undamaged

gorgonians swayed in the current and were enveloped by multi-coloured little fish, benefitting from the fans' prominent location as they fed on the nutrient stream washing over the reef wall.

5 Hard coral

Hard corals are not difficult to find. Every reef in Sharm has them in abundance, so I challenged the Elite sea-gypsies with finding me some big yellow lettuce-leaf corals to photograph.

"Oh, that's too easy" G told me. "We'll find some absolute crackers at Jackson reef." So after a short boat-ride north-east from Sharks Bay we dropped through the water above masses of the stuff.

The lettuce coral was more abundant near the reef top, growing in circular domes and glowing almost fluorescent green in the sunlight.

Swarms of the ever-present anthias gave an orange contrast to this excellent photographic opportunity, set against the dancing sunbeams formed from the surface ripples.

Another challenge successfully met.

6 Soft Coral

If it's colour you're after, the soft corals of the Red Sea will always provide. Vibrant reds, purples, oranges, yellows and pinks create a striking contrast to the azure blue that seems to be peculiar to this part of the world.

Photo opps abound, especially where the reefs are subjected to strong currents. Ras Mohamed National Marine Park is the place to find the best of these corals as they grow in small communities. 🐠



Above: Lettuce coral at Jackson Reef.

Pictured: Huge gorgonians at Ras Nasrani.





A relaxed boat-ride south-west from the harbour at Sharks Bay takes about an hour but it's worth the journey. Ras Mo is without doubt the jewel in the crown of Red Sea reefs.

The colourful soft corals can be found virtually anywhere, so I challenged the guys to find some for G to pose behind.

Ten minutes on the reef slope at Shark Observatory and we found the perfect spot, with deep purple and red corals sharing space on the wall with enough room for G to get behind the delicate fronds without touching them.

Click, click, job done.

7 Anemonefish

The sweethearts of the underwater realm – anemonefish, clownfish, Nemos, call them what you like, everybody loves them. I can't seem to swim past the little cuties when I'm toting my camera; they have some sort of tractor beam that draws me in, and I'm not alone in that.

Dozens can be found on most of the reefs, mainly tucked away in little coral or rock alcoves that make for an impossible shot, but on Anemone City at the intersection of the mainland slope and the satellite reefs of Shark and Yolanda the anemones are big and accessible.

Above: If it's colour you want then the Egyptian soft coral delivers.

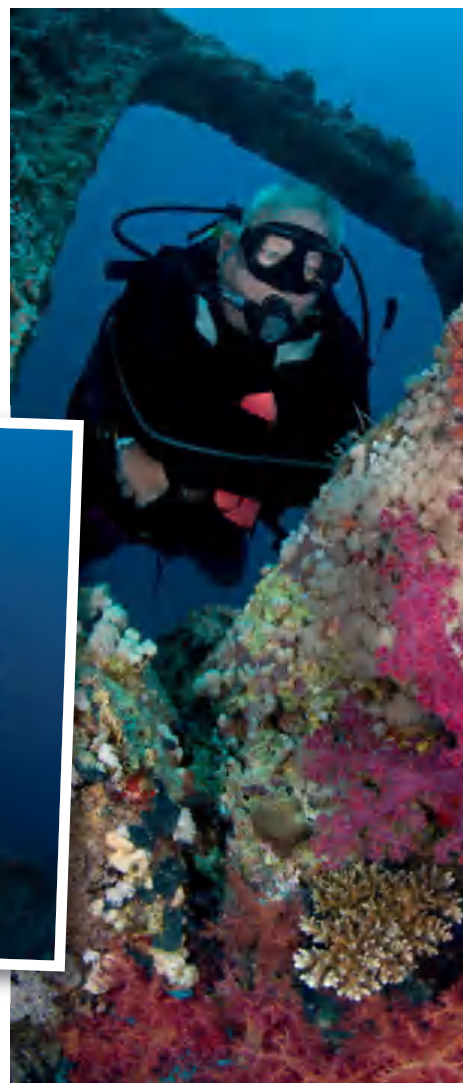
Above right: Anemones are found everywhere but Anemone City rules.

Below: Bren-gun carriers bulldozed off a cliff near to the port.

They are also filled with other small life – two-spot damselfish, chromis, anthias and checkerboard wrasse share the anemonefishes' domain and take advantage of the protection of the host's stinging tentacles.

The anemone skirts are bright crimson and always photograph well when exposed by the current.

It was easy-peasy to get shots of a young Welshman next to one particularly large specimen, but dealing with photo-bombing fish proved less so.



8 Wrecks

Diving in Sharm, wrecks are always high on the agenda. There are the remains of the cargo from the *Yolanda* at Ras Mo but I'm not into capturing images of porcelain toilet cisterns, especially those that have been moved by uncaring divers into a false line-up.

Instead, I asked the Elite boys to take me to the wreck of the *Dunraven*. It's well within day-boat range, making it a true Sharm wreck-site, and it's a whole ship, sunk and turned turtle, split in two with easy and safe access to its interior.

Dunraven is full of life with abundant, rich coral growth, marine creatures and fish-life, and has an amazingly intact and accessible rudder and prop at the stern.

Alun and I timed our dive after all the other divers had passed through, giving us the chance to explore the entire wreck and capture images of the exterior and interior without getting in anyone's way.

Returning to port, we stopped off at a site where a multitude of Bren-gun carriers had been bulldozed off the shore and lie in a tangled heap down the rocky slope below the waters' surface.

This wreckage is fantastic to dive but tough to photograph because of the size of the carriers and their configuration. Nevertheless, with the *Dunraven* shots in the bag, wrecks could be ticked off the list.



9 Anthias

These abundant and charismatic fish are found everywhere on the Sharm reefs. Nicknamed Red Sea goldfish, the iridescent orange females and purple and gold males form an ever-expanding and contracting halo around the reef structures, darting into the reef when threatened, and rising as one when the coast is clear.

The humble anthias were number one on our list of favourite Red Sea subjects, and rightly so. They're hardly challenging

to find – it's harder to get a shot without them in the frame to be honest – but getting good shots is sometimes difficult.

The trick is to catch them when they rise in unison from the reef, resembling fireworks exploding from a central point.

The Welsh fish-herders had a trick up their wetsuit sleeves to make this happen. Both Alun and G struck their hands together to create a loud clap above the shoals. The small fish dived for cover and, as they rose together a few seconds later – click, gotcha!

10 Turtles


"It's all gone according to plan, hasn't it Nige?" the quietly spoken man from the valleys asked over a beer at Elite's exclusive evening hangout, the Stella Bar.

"Not quite, Alun," was my answer. There was something missing from the list and it was everyone's dream encounter – turtles.

These enigmatic wanderers of the reefs have been the mainstay of Egyptian diving for me on past trips; I can't remember a visit on which I haven't enjoyed an encounter or two.

On this occasion, however, they had decided to give us all a wide berth and were conspicuous by their absence.

Oh well, you can't win them all, but I'm now in a position to answer the guy who asked the question at Birmingham's NEC: "No I didn't but, with a tiny bit more luck, yes, you can".

Of course you could make your own list a lot more challenging by adding mantas, whale sharks, eagle rays or hammerheads, but even then it's not beyond the bounds of possibility for the amazing team at Elite Diving to deliver all the goods. 



Above: It's difficult to get a shot without anthias in Sharm waters, yet they are Nigel and Saeed's number-one choice for photography.

Left: Alun has a close look at the prop and rudder on the wreck of the *Dunraven*.

Right: Alun and Moyra Evans of Elite Diving.

FACTFILE

GETTING THERE ▶ Nigel flew direct to Sharm with easyJet from Gatwick, www.easyjet.com

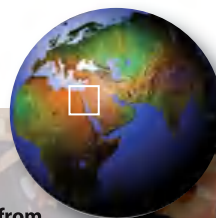
DIVING & ACCOMMODATION ▶ Elite Diving, www.elite-diving.com

WHEN TO GO ▶ June and July are the best times to encounter the fish-spawning aggregations at Ras Mo.

MONEY ▶ Egyptian pound

PRICES ▶ Elite offers dive and stay packages of seven nights' B&B with a choice of hotel options and a five-day dive package from £240, excluding flights.

VISITOR INFORMATION ▶ www.egypt.travel





A Whale of a Mouthful, Winner, Under Water, Michael Aw, Australia.



The Shark Surfer, Finalist, The Wildlife Photojournalist Award single image, Thomas P Peschak, Germany.



Turtle Flight, Finalist, Amphibians and Reptiles, David Doubilet, USA.

IMAGE POWER

THE PRESTIGIOUS ANNUAL Wildlife Photographer of the Year exhibition, now in its 51st year, opened at London's Natural History Museum in October and runs until 10 April 2016.

Some 100 winning and finalist images have been selected from around 42,000 photographs submitted by professional and amateur photographers in 96 countries. Ten of these are underwater shots.

Five images make up the exhibition's "Underwater Species" section, which was won by Australian Michael Aw for his image of a Bryde's whale charging through a shoal of sardines off the Wild Coast in South Africa's Eastern Cape province.

Of the five images in the category

"Amphibians and Reptiles", underwater photographs took three of the finalist positions, while the winner and fourth finalist were semi-underwater shots taken by photographers sitting in rivers.

In contrast to some previous years, no British underwater photographers feature.

In addition to its London showing, the exhibition will tour in Britain and overseas in 2016.

Entries for next year's Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition can be filed "between December 2015 and February 2016", says the Natural History Museum.

All of this year's exhibition images plus those of previous years' events can be viewed at www.nhm.ac.uk/wpy



Cuban Survivor, Amphibians and Reptiles, Finalist, Mirko Zanni, Switzerland.



Winner, Portfolio Award, Audun Rikardsen, Norway.



It Came from the Deep, Finalist, Under Water, Fabien Michenet, France.



Just Jellyfish, Finalist, Under Water, Thomas P Peschak, Germany.



Winner, Portfolio Award, Audun Rikardsen, Norway.



Rhythm of the Blues, Finalist, Under Water, Cristobal Serrano, Spain.



Winner, Portfolio Award, Audun Rikardsen, Norway.

CLASH OF THE TITANS

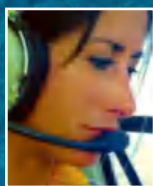
ALL OF A SUDDEN we're being buzzed by killer whales. Riding our wake, just metres from the boat, cruising alongside, doubling back and overtaking us with ease, their power and presence is impressive.

The light is starting to fade and filming conditions aren't good, but we had almost lost faith in seeing these guys again, and we push it as long as we can.

Finally, the approaching darkness calls time on our adventures. We're 45 minutes from the harbour and have reef to navigate on our way home.

Encouragingly the pod is still heading north when we leave – the orcas have been out of our range 125 miles south for a long time, and this first encounter is a tantalising glimpse of what might be to come.

"KILLER WHALES? We don't get killer whales here. You sure you don't want whale sharks?" On my arrival at Western Australia's Exmouth airport, nearly a month ago, the cabbie had my best interests at heart.



Humpback whales take on killer whales *en masse* at Ningaloo – such a spectacle had never been witnessed before, but producer ELLEN HUSAIN was there with a TV crew to see it all

It was the same at the accommodation: "You're here to film killer whales? Never seen any." Then helpfully: "We do get some humpback whales. But whale sharks – now that's what you want!"

Now don't get me wrong, I love a whale shark as much – more than – the next diver, but these slow cruising plankton-sifters were not going to work for a behavioural series called *The Hunt*.

'KILLER WHALES? WE DON'T GET KILLER WHALES HERE!'



It all started in 2011, when a whale-shark spotter plane chanced upon and photographed killer whales attacking a humpback mother and calf off the Ningaloo reef. It looked incredible, and was behaviour that had never been filmed for broadcast.

Trouble was, the killer whales had hardly ever been seen, and contacting everyone and anyone who worked on the water in Ningaloo led to only five confirmed attack dates since 2007.

It was always going to be a risky shoot, but we needed a strategy. Teaming up with renowned killer-whale scientist Bob Pitman and local marine expert John Totterdall made sense. While they mounted the first formal scientific study of the Ningaloo orcas, we would attempt to film their behaviour.

Nine days ago they managed to get a satellite tag on one of the pod, but since then it's been an agonising wait as the orcas cruised further and further south, and completely out of our range.

"They could go anywhere. They could go all the way to Antarctica if they wanted." Bob's professional opinion was not a lot of consolation. But looking at my compiled historic sightings there was still a chance, and in the past two days the killer whales have turned around, and now with our new encounter it feels as if our luck might be changing.

SIX IN THE MORNING, and according to the satellite track the killer whales have come close overnight. Hitting the water, we speed in the direction of the last tag position. It's more than an hour old, but we strike lucky. Splashing on the horizon signals that something is up.

To film under water while keeping up with the whales we have engineered our 4k Sony F55 camera in Gates housing onto a heavy-duty steel pole, with a remote video feed coming to a monitor on the boat.

We sorely wanted to dive the event, but in the end getting up that close to 35 tonnes of riled-up humpback fighting off a pod of 5-tonne orcas wasn't going to be viable. With 10-12m vis, less than a whale's length, seeing, let alone filming anything would mean being right in the danger-zone.

Even keeping up with the hunt would be impossible without propulsion, and just dropping in would have limited success. So I am on the monitor, while Doug Anderson operates the F55 camera. He will dive with the orcas later.

The first hunt we see fails. The pod have a humpback mother and calf surrounded, but the mother is a force to be reckoned with.

She positions her defenceless calf as far from the killer whales as she can – high

up out of the water, on her back. Turning in arcs, churning up the water and flailing with her huge pectoral flippers she creates a smoke-screen of bubbles.

Impossible to see through, and impenetrable to the killer whales' sonar, this is a dangerous place for an orca to be.

A blow from a humpback could cause serious injury or kill, and the white water conceals powerful sweeps of huge tail and 4m pecs, themselves covered with razor-sharp 5cm barnacles. After 15 minutes of fending off the orcas she makes it to an outcrop of the reef, and they give up the chase.

Following them out to sea they change mode completely, from hunting to slow-cruising and socialising. It's a good time for Doug to get in the water. Roped off the back of the boat, he takes the plunge.

Scuba is not permitted and he films on breath-hold. While few people ever dive with transient killer whales, there are no records of a diver ever being attacked, and orcas are known to be very prey-selective.

It's a tense but wonderful moment as four of the orca that just hours earlier were taking on a humpback and calf more than 10 times Doug's size just cruise slowly by him, dwarfing his frame but showing no signs of aggression. He later says that he felt no threat from them while in the water.

It's not until around 4pm that we see another attack. The change in the orcas' behaviour is obvious as they speed purposefully towards a mother and calf.

This time the outcome is not so happy. The pole-mounted camera allows us to get in close and keep up with the boiling tumult.

Amid furious trumpets and snorts, the mother thrashes and turns in circles, but the attack is sustained, and in a foam of white water the calf, bloody, is brought to the surface. We can see that it's small life is over.

In the moment adrenaline has kept everyone's attention focused on the job of what we've come to film, but as the outcome is resolved and the action

subsides, it's impossible not to feel for the animals involved.

The mother has lost her newborn calf, and we watch as she continues her futile assault, furiously trumpeting and churning the water in the wake of her loss. It's a poignant reminder of the sentence of these large marine mammals, and the costs involved.

WE HAVE SEEN our first hunt, but to really reveal the detail of the behaviour we need to film from both the boat and the air.

Poring over the charts reveals a good weather window coming up: easterly winds of just a few knots. There would never be a better time to go for the aeriels. Scrambling kit and crew, aerial cameraman Blair Monk cuts short his holiday in Fiji, and flies in to join us.

Untying the helicopter as the sun rises the signs are good, with hardly a breath of wind in the air.

Flying time is hugely expensive, so to be as effective as possible the boats will look for the killer whales, and we'll coordinate by radio.

Pictured: Mother and calf and escort migrate up Ningaloo reef.

Below left: Killer whale pod on the move.

some of the most beautiful images. With barely a wrinkle on the water's surface, the light penetrates deep and clear.

The whales appear suspended in an ethereal blue space, while glowing sun-rays radiate around them through the deep blue water.

Whales weightless in a dream-world. The image is bewitching, so clear that we can see barnacles, scars, tubercles. Mothers chaperone their calves up the reef, calves frolic, sometimes running rings around mum, sometimes breaching repeatedly. Here and there groups of whales travel together.

It's a fantastic sight, but as the breeze starts to come up – smudging our perfect image, its time to get back.

MID-MORNING the boat picks up the killer whales out at sea. They're travelling slowly, far from the migrating mothers and calves that hug the reef for safety. We do a few shots but return to the airstrip to fill our tank. We need maximum flying time in case something happens.

It's about 4pm when we get the call.

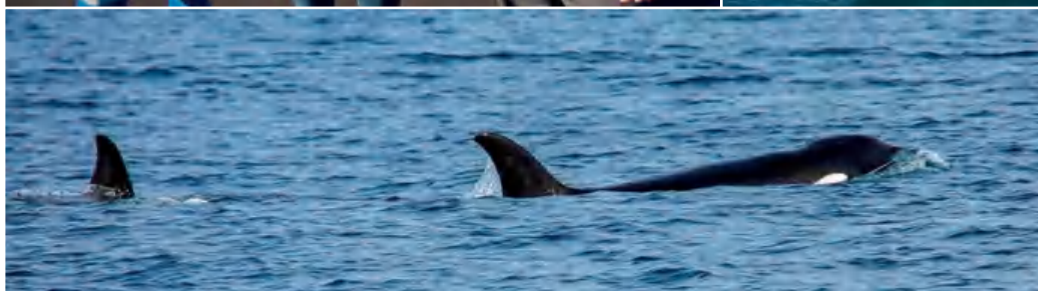


Knowing the calm weather won't last long we take to the air as soon as there is good light. Although we don't yet know where the killer whales are, the humpback migration is an important part of the story and I want to get shots before conditions change.

With just 4-knot winds the lee of the reef is glassy, and we are rewarded with

The killer whales' behaviour has switched completely, and they're now travelling fast, porpoising, heading straight for the reef. With bearings from the boat, we fly out to meet them.

Hovering up high and using the zoom of our gyro stabilised camera, we try to determine which humpbacks they will go for. There are several mothers and calves around.



The killer whales seem to be choosing their target too. As we watch, two of the pod seem to have split off. They buzz a few different whales, including one with no calf. We're trying to decipher their motives when the boat radios to say that it has picked up the rest of the pod.

Framing up, we see four killer whales bear down on a mother and her calf. This time the battle is immense.

As the killer whales attack from all sides, we see the mother with calf up high on her back, right out of the water. From

Above, clockwise from top left: The aerial camera team — pilot Dale Webb, producer Ellen Husain and cameraman Blair Monk; on the science boat; Ellen operates the 200kg crane for the gyro stabilised camera; killer whales off the coast.

Below: A shark is a small threat to mother and calf compared to a pod or orcas.

Below right: Wary humpback mother.

above, the killer whales are small, dark, streamlined shapes, dwarfed by the humpback.

Despite the immense size and power of the mother, it's clear that defence against the numbers is not easy. Twisting and turning to meet their every approach, she is having to fight hard.

Then the "escorts" get involved. Escort whales often travel with female humpbacks on migration. They are assumed to be males but not necessarily the father of the calf, and their role has

never been properly understood.

As a second and then a third adult humpback joins the fight, it is truly humpback whales on one side versus killer whales on the other.

IN THE PLAN-VIEW from above we see the escorts flanking the mother left and right. The killer whales are fast and nimble and work like a pack, attacking from different sides at different times.

The humpbacks are huge freight trains — powerful heavy hitters, but slow in



★ You can see a "making of" behind-the-scenes film on the killer whales shoot narrated by David Attenborough on *The Hunt* DVD extras. The DVD goes on sale on 6 December. The sequence appeared in episode 1 of the continuing series *The Hunt*, first broadcast on BBC1 on 1 November 2015.



comparison. In the mayhem the baby somehow becomes washed from the back of the mother, and there's a collective gasp in the chopper as we think it's all over.

A killer whale surfaces right next to it, but somehow, miraculously, the mother recovers the baby, likely hidden by the white water.

I can think of no larger battle in nature, and there's a moment at which I'm struck by the thought that no-one on Earth, living or dead, has ever seen this in the

Above: Mother keeps calf close alongside.

Above right: Sharks are attracted by the commotion of the hunt.

Below: The end. Nothing is wasted in the oceans – the calf is food not just for the killer whales but for the sharks too.

way we're seeing it now.

Hovering high overhead with the powerful zoom of our gyrostabilised camera we can see the whole battle unfold below in unprecedented detail.

It's visceral, but it's also nature at work. These huge battles are part of life – as is death. It's the death of some that feed the lives of others. The killer whales are predators, and this is what they do.


We see a lot of amazing things that day. Working with the science boat and dive-boat below we see two similarly

huge battles. While scientists have long speculated that orcas attack humpbacks, it's never been formally documented first-hand, and the aggressive counter-attacks by the escorts were also unknown

In one attack, the humpbacks are just too good, too defensive, and at some unseen signal the killer whales call off the hunt, three of them swimming off in unison, side by side.

It's hugely inspiring that the natural world still holds secrets of this scale that we know nothing about.

Remarkably, the last hunt ends exactly as the sun dips, and just as we reach the edge of our fuel and flying time. It's been a day none of us will ever forget.

A YEAR LATER, I return for a second shoot. Seeing my cases of equipment, the cabbie asks: "You here to film our killer whales?" Times have changed. 



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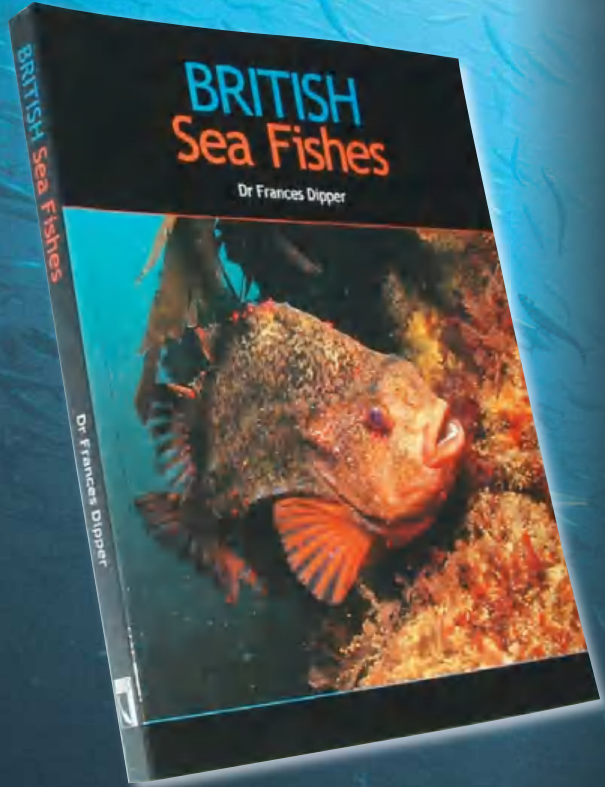





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In the third article in his series, **SIMON PRIDMORE** suggests

techniques divers can adopt to be better prepared to deal with air supply emergencies

WHAT TO DO WHEN IT ALL RUNS OUT

THERE ARE DEFINITE BENEFITS, both tangible and intangible, to diving with someone else. We are human beings, after all – we like to share our experiences and we also derive a great deal of emotional security from the company of others.

There are also occasions when having a buddy around can be of enormous practical assistance.

If you become entangled in fishing-line or a net, a buddy can see the situation much more clearly than you and is better placed to extract you.

If you become confused or anxious, your buddy's mere presence and calm disposition can be reassuring; and if you suffer a serious marine-life injury, you may need a buddy to get you safely to the surface and out of the water.

Arguably, the strongest argument for diving with someone else, however, is that you can assist your buddy in an air-supply emergency or that your buddy can help you.

RUNNING OUT FAST

A couple of years ago, the folk at *Advanced Diver* magazine in the USA

ran a few scenarios using a standard set of equipment on a full 12-litre cylinder placed at a depth of 30m.

They found that a burst intermediate-pressure hose emptied the cylinder in less than 90 seconds. A purged (that is, freeflowing) regulator did not take much longer, causing the cylinder pressure to plummet from 200 bar to zero in just 154 seconds.

So, if you're using a single cylinder with no back-up when you're diving at any sort of depth and something like this happens, you're unlikely to have enough time to make an ascent at a safe speed on your own.

You're going to need someone to share their air with you.

There is also the possibility that you might start a dive on an almost empty cylinder without noticing, and run out of air while still at depth.

This has been the experience of a number of divers who thought they were much too careful for something like this to ever happen to them!

This is why we all learn at an early stage in our diving lives how to assist another diver with an air-supply emergency. Despite this, however, real-

life situations like this often end badly, with one or both divers coming to harm.

In this article I suggest ways in which you can train and configure your equipment to give you and the people with whom you dive a better chance of survival when one of you suddenly finds yourself out of air.

UNREALISTIC DRILLS

In standard diver training, the drill begins with two divers kneeling facing each other. One signals calmly to the other that they have run out of air.

The donor hands over their octopus regulator, they establish a mutual grip and, after a minute or so, on a signal from the instructor, the drill is ended and the out-of-air diver returns the octopus and starts breathing from their own regulator again.

The drill is then repeated with the divers exchanging roles. A development on the theme has the two divers execute a timed swim together once they have begun air-sharing, then return to the starting point.

The benefit of these exercises is limited. First, they presuppose an

unrealistic scenario where two divers are side by side and stationary when the emergency occurs.

Second, the manner in which the drills are conducted is unlikely to induce any significant degree of stress in the participants, whereas a real-world air-supply emergency is a highly stressful event. Third, the sequence fails to include an ascent.

Two divers, both breathing heavily under stress and sharing a cylinder, need to have an immediate ascent at the front of their minds, because their air supply is likely to become rapidly exhausted.

Unfortunately, the exercises they have practised are more likely to make them think that the act of air-sharing is the most important thing, and that once this has been established the emergency is over.

If anything, the situation has become even more serious. There are now two divers at risk instead of one, and any delay in ascent could be critical.

The emergency is not over until both divers are buoyant at the surface.

'REAL-LIFE' DRILLS

Of course, the air-sharing swim is supposed to simulate an ascent, and a good instructor would explain that, but it is commonly accepted that, when called to action in an emergency, you are far more likely to remember something you have done than something you have been told.

People involved in a stressful situation will act according to instinct rather than intellect, and instinct is developed by repetitive rehearsal. This is the concept behind the progressive series of drills I describe in the text box accompanying

Below: Even face on, the octopus in a standard configuration is invisible

Right: Long hose visibly tucked into the harness waistband

Far right: It's very clear which regulator the diver wants to donate. The back-up is in the picture but almost invisible.

this article, which take you through increasingly realistic scenarios, allowing you to gradually develop both your technique and your confidence.

Practise these with your buddy or dive team. I would recommend a team of three: two divers executing the drills and the third person acting as observer / safety diver and providing an objective critique of the air-sharing divers' performance. Roles should be exchanged during each session.

WHAT REALLY HAPPENS

On the two occasions that people ran out of air on a dive and came to me for



assistance, they both arrived unnoticed from above and behind, and grabbed the regulator out of my mouth. Both also dragged my mask off in the process!

This is what typically happens when you run out of air. At the moment you suddenly realise that you have no air to breathe, you stop swimming and instinctively hold your breath. This causes you to float upwards.

Assuming that you have enough self-control and awareness to resist making a panicked runaway ascent, the next thing you do is look around desperately for someone nearby who has air and swim as fast as you can to reach your prospective saviour, who is now usually below you.

As you swim, the anxiety you originally felt on finding yourself airless increases with the effort you are expending, and the gradual build-up of carbon dioxide in your body.

By now, you have only one thought in your head: "I need air!"

The concept of politely requesting assistance with a series of calm gestures could not be further from your mind.

The equipment set-up that most divers use is a regulator on a short hose in their mouth and an octopus regulator on a slightly longer hose, secured to the right side of the BC.

From above, the octopus is invisible, so you just grab the most obvious source of life-saving air you can see, which is the regulator in the diver's mouth.

Having taken it, you quickly find that the hose is so short that, to breathe from it properly, you need to turn it around.

This presses you up against the diver's right-hand side, making it hard for them to reach their octopus without pushing you away. A confused, chaotic struggle

OUT-OF-AIR PRACTICE DRILLS

PHASE 1

To be practised in a swimming pool or calm, shallow, protected body of water.

1. You and your buddy position yourselves 10m apart. Your buddy "runs out of air" and swims towards you without breathing.
2. When you see your buddy signal that they need air, prepare whichever of your second stage regulators is on the longer hose and give this to them when they arrive.
3. Begin air-sharing, then ascend slowly together. On arrival at the surface you auto-inflate your BC while supporting your buddy as they orally inflate their BC.
4. Repeat the drill, alternating roles and increasing the distance between you until the person who is out of air starts experiencing significant stress towards the end of the non-breathing swim.
5. Then add a new level of difficulty. Turn your back

so that you cannot see your buddy coming, and do not prepare a response until they arrive and spin you around.

6. Finally, practise the drill while you are both swimming, one following the other, so that your buddy is in the realistic position of having to catch up with a moving target to share air.

Do not end any of the drills until both divers are at the surface and positively buoyant.

PHASE 2

To be practised during ocean dives.

1. Begin phase 2 only when you are both comfortable with the phase 1 drills.
2. Once in a while, particularly at the beginning of a dive season, agree that one or other of you will initiate the drill at some point during a normal dive

in open water. Advise anyone else diving with you that this is what you intend to do, so that they don't mistake it for a real emergency and try to intervene.

3. Then practise the drill as you did in the pool, first when you are swimming close together in the shallows, then extending the distance and depth as you become more accomplished.
4. Always follow an out-of-air swim with an ascent and establishment of surface buoyancy so that the sequence is burned into your minds and becomes automatic.
5. Finally, to test yourselves in a realistic scenario, involve a third person to act as the trigger for the drill. Ask them to watch for a moment in the dive when it looks as if you or your buddy has become distracted, or when you have drifted a little further apart from each other than usual. Then, the third person should signal to one of you that you're out of air. This initiates the drill.

takes place and sometimes, as the history of diving tells us, disaster ensues.

A SOLUTION THAT WORKS

As well as improving your technique by practising real-life drills, you can anticipate, prepare for and reduce



the risk of air-supply emergencies by adopting a regulator set-up similar to those that technical divers use. The following is an example.

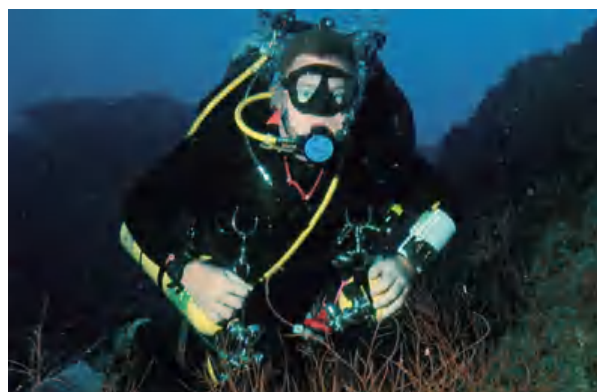
Your primary regulator should be attached to a brightly coloured hose. The second stage should ideally be brightly coloured too, and a number of manufacturers offer options.

The hose should be at least 1.5m-long and, depending on your size and shape, the extra length can be wrapped over your chest, tucked into loops of tubing along the side of your harness or BC or tucked into your waistband.

The important thing is that it all comes free easily when it is deployed.

Your back-up second-stage regulator should be black and attached to a black hose to make it less obvious than the primary. This hose should be as short as possible, while still allowing you to move your head freely when you're breathing from it. You keep it on your upper chest, under your chin, held in place by a length of cord or surgical tubing looped around your neck.

When an out-of-air diver approaches you to share air, the colour coding will attract their attention and direct them to the regulator you want them to take.



MIKE PALMER

Read more from Simon Pridmore in *Scuba Confidential – An Insider's Guide to Becoming a Better Diver* and *Scuba Professional – Insights into Sport Diver Training & Operations*, both available on Amazon in a variety of formats

The length of the hose will then allow them to remove themselves to a reasonable distance from you once they have taken it.

When the regulator leaves your mouth, all you need do is dip your chin and pop your back-up into your mouth with one hand. You will then both be breathing comfortably and ready to begin a controlled ascent together.

The combination of real-life drills and a well-thought-out regulator set-up can turn an air-supply emergency from a potential disaster into a minor inconvenience.

Practise the techniques often so that they become completely instinctive.



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CHASING THE VIS IN SKOMER

A SUMMER DIVE expedition took us to the beautiful Pembrokeshire coast in south-west Wales, and in particular Skomer Island. Imagine Lundy surrounded by a bunch of other little Lundys and you're there.

Preparation for any UK-based sea-diving trip starts with following the weather forecast a week prior to the trip, and we all know that the weather on the exposed Welsh coast is susceptible to dramatic change.

It wasn't looking particularly great a week ahead, but a favourable window emerged and we went for it.

I live on the south coast, in Brighton, and the road map indicated that my journey to our base in the idyllic fishing village of Dale would cover exactly 300 miles, complete with a tour of the length of the M4.

For me, the adventure of a dive-trip begins on leaving the house, even if that



Sometimes pent-up anticipation fades when conditions disappoint on the first dive. Sometimes it marks a trend – how would WILL APPEYARD fare diving around Skomer Island in Pembrokeshire?

does include some of the most frustrating motorway driving on the planet. The trick is to either set off super-early in the morning or get your driving out of the way at night.

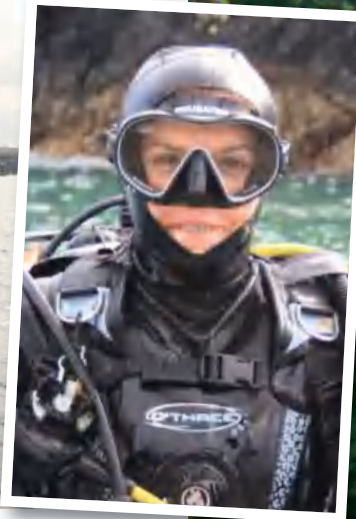
We chose Brian Dilly of Dive In 2 Pembrokeshire to look after our team over the weekend. His website, albeit of a basic design, struck me as being the most informative and enthusiastic of the few available. It was packed with inspiring photos, videos and relevant information,

accompanied by informative maps of dive-sites and the general area. With Brian's 25 years of diving experience there, what could possibly go wrong?

We had chosen two full days' diving from one of Brian's hardboats. The *Eva Ann* had, we were told, only recently been fitted with a diver-lift. He would also be running two other boats full of divers – *Eva Ann*'s sister-boat *Overdale* and a pretty standard-looking RIB.

We had also ordered packed lunches for both days diving at £5 a pop – locally sourced produce and home-made cake, all lovingly prepared by Brian's wife. This would later be washed down by unlimited amounts of tea and coffee.

Depending on the tides, ropes off would take place either from the pontoon at Dale or the marina at Milford Haven. I was banking on Dale, firstly because I was staying on a campsite within spitting distance of the pontoon and



secondly because I think it's a far prettier place than Milford Haven.

Most of our team were staying in B&Bs of varying standards at Milford Haven, so I'd drawn the shortish straw. Allow 20 minutes to reach the marina at Milford Haven if you do choose Dale as your base, as well as a decent amount of kit-faffing time once you reach the pontoon there.

There would be two dives a day. Brian announced when we booked that he had more than enough cylinders for each diver and charged for air-fills only, which was refreshing. Nitrox appeared to be in short supply, however, so if you're looking to extend your bottom time bear this in mind prior to the trip.

ON REACHING THE pontoon on Saturday morning, Brian indeed appeared to be carrying enough cylinders to service an army of divers. With ropes off an hour later than planned, the three boats set off in convoy up through the Haven, with the oil refinery and heavy-duty shipping as our backdrop, past the dramatic cliffs of St Ann's Head and into the huge swell of open water.

Above: Loading the dive-boats at Milford Haven.

Above right: Back from an enjoyable dive.

Below: Octopus

Once away from the refinery, one can begin to appreciate the dramatic scenery, with Skokholm Island visible first, followed by Skomer, further north in the distance.

Both sit close to the mainland, where we were heading for dive one. According to Pembrokeshire Online: "*The Pembrokeshire Coast National Park displays a greater variety of geological features and associated landforms than any equivalent area of the same size in the British Isles.*" The ancient volcanic history is evident from the impressive cliffs and crags, as is the immense geo-diversity that follows the coastline.

The sea was lumpy, to put it mildly, and I wondered what might happen if we hit one of those huge waves broadside on.

The skipper announced that the ride would settle down once we reached the north side of Skomer and the tip of the mainland, in the lee of the wind.

A highlight would be passing through Jack Sound, a patch of angry-looking water that funneled through a passage between the mainland to the east and Midland Isle – Skomer's little brother – to



the west. At the southern entrance to Jack Sound the 10m-at-most seabed suddenly plunges to 30m, creating a wild and turbulent section of white water as the sea is forced over the obstruction – definitely not bathing territory!

Once through the Sound the sea flattened out and we were able to move about, putting gear together and, for those who needed it, using the cramped head in peace!

WHEN APPROACHING a UK site, top of my list is a visibility assessment, always with a sense of optimism. It's usually obvious when you're about to submerge into pea soup, but that's not always the case when it looks ropy at the surface.

Our first site, a wall somewhere along Haven Point, looked "reasonably promising" and, of course, the boat-crew reported that "last week it was 10m-plus".

There was only one way to find out, so I grabbed my camera and torch and jumped in. I made a note to avoid the fishermen's lines as I let the air out of my wing and disappeared into the gloom!

Gloom wasn't what I'd come here for. I wanted to get away from the kelp and, after eventually finding bare rock, felt my way deeper, wondering why I'd brought my camera. The rock gave way to a sandy seabed but the visibility didn't improve.





I had reached only 15m so decided that this would have to go down as a check-dive. Perhaps we'd have better luck at another site with some depth.

I'm not one for enduring miserable dives, so I counted my losses and escaped to the surface after only 20 minutes down. Other divers stuck it out and did discover an octopus among the rocks, a top-drawer find whether in the UK or abroad.

We discussed our options and put our trust in Brian's experience. Post free-range egg sandwiches (from Brian's chickens) we motored over to Skomer and North Haven, a bay at the island's

north-west tip. The topography really does resemble Lundy Island here, Lundy being one of my favourite UK locations, so a measure of excitement returned.

Seals flopped about on nearby rocks, though not in the sort of numbers found at Lundy. We dropped into the water hoping for better vis, and seal action too.

The bottom was again at around 10m but visibility was vastly better. As we finned across the sandy seabed we began to find scallop after scallop, the biggest I've seen – some the size of side-plates.

These guys are monsters because Skomer is a marine reserve – you can't

touch them. Spider crabs were also numerous, but many were just remnants, the occupants having shed their shells and headed for deeper water.

The area is also home to thousands of hermit crabs of varying sizes.

We spent a good 50 minutes at the site and turned back towards the boat as we reached the outer edge of the bay, where the current had started to pull. The seals stayed out of the water, but there was always tomorrow.

Day one had been a good introduction but I was looking forward to checking out some of the more dramatic wall and pinnacle diving we had heard about.

The sea had flattened out, making for a more comfortable ride back, then it was straight to the marina bar for refuelling.

COME SUNDAY, the sea state had switched to millpond as we headed straight and fast for Skomer's north side, though Jack Sound was as aggressive as it always is. We were starting on the North Wall, a gnarly-sounding site that begins at the foot of Skomer's cliffs.

We made our way down to 30m, where the visibility was the best we'd seen that weekend, stretching towards the 8m mark. The wall plunges to 40m if you're looking to go deeper.

Wall dives are my favourite kind. I like the variety of marine life at the various levels, from the kelp often sitting near the top to the cave-like sections that create a habitat for squat lobsters, prawns and crabs, and the sheer-face sections, often home to swathes of jewel anemones.

I was surprised not to find jewel anemone in abundance here and wondered whether they might appear in greater numbers on the southern side of the island. Several squat lobsters were tucked into cracks, with crayfish living in holes next door. The various wrasse appeared unfazed by divers, but common lobsters we found did appear shy.

Over 50 minutes we made our way back up the wall scanning any cracks and

Above: In search of macro subjects.

Below, from left: The dive-boats at Skomer; bullhead.



DAMIAN BROWN

crevices with torches. This was the kind of diving I'd come for.

Surface intervals are always a pleasurable experience in such environments, and as well as taking in the scenery, observing the seabirds present adds to the experience. Puffins live at Skomer alongside guillemots, cormorants, razorbills and more.

I asked Brian whether his operation relied on diving, and he explained that this side of his work merely funded the workshop that serviced his core business – supplying safety-boat solutions to oil-refinery-associated shipping.

OUR LAST DIVE was on one of Skomer's many submerged pinnacles, its tip 8m down and its base at 40m. This site was only metres from the island's steep cliffs.

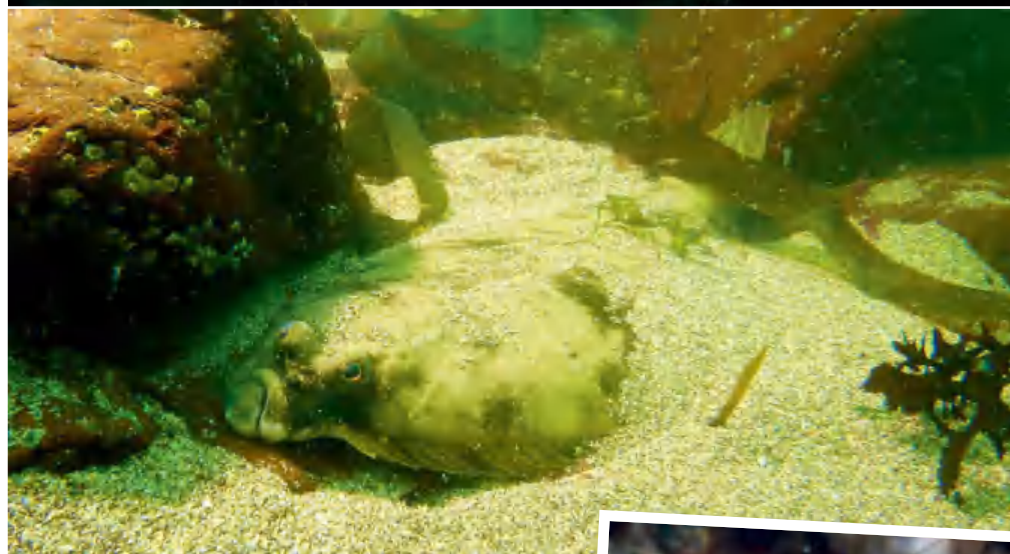
We dropped down the first rocky ledge. The sandy seabed began at 10m and then sloped off at a steep angle into the depths.

The pinnacle walls overhung in many places, creating large caves in some sections. One of these was rammed with crabs. The macro enthusiasts identified many nudibranch species, and our octopus specialist managed to find yet another example.

Visibility was better still as we wound our way down the pinnacle towards the 30m mark. The water was 2° colder here than at the southern UK sites we'd dived earlier that month, but the prolific life kept us entertained enough not to feel it.

I took a final glance at some of the super-sized scallops that filled the seabed and another at my dive computer, began the ascent up the pinnacle and sent up my last SMB of the weekend.

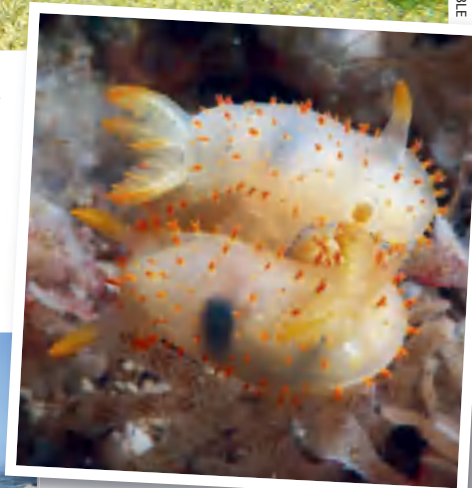
We had hoped to encounter seals, but only one individual made a brief appearance during our 5m stop. Perhaps they're just not used to bubble-blowing




From top: Will Appleyard on the North Wall; plaice; nudibranchs; navigating the volatile section of water that is Jack Sound.

divers, unlike their boisterous cousins at Lundy or the Farnes.

The highlight in this area for metal enthusiasts would be a dive on the wreck of the *Lucy*, the Dutch coaster that lies in 40m just off North Haven Bay (see John Liddiard's *Wreck Tour 3* on DiverNet).



We had only scratched the surface, and plan to explore further next summer. Brian and his crew took great care of us, and his enthusiasm and assistance knows no limits. The dive operation's tagline is "Ceilliau y Cwn" and I agree with that. I'll leave you to figure out what it means! 

*** Dive In 2 Pembrokeshire** charges £40pp per day for boat charter, with packed lunch £5 and air-fills £3, www.divein2pembrokeshire.com. Accommodation is available at Point Farm Campsite in Dale (limited spaces, book early), www.pointfarmdale.co.uk and the Heart of Oak Inn in Milford Haven, www.heartfoakinn.com



The Philippines...

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Underwater image © Aaron Wong

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DEATH



Shrimps were gradually disappearing into starfish – something strange was going on in the Philippines. **LISA COLLINS** investigates

SWIMMING SLOWLY over the reef investigating the nooks, crannies, sandy spits and rocky bottom, my eyes were drawn to a starfish with beautiful, mesmerising filaments that waved about in the current. I had never seen one like it.

I couldn't identify the starfish but its colouring was unusual, bright orange and red with whitish blotches. As I looked more closely, it seemed as if the filaments were catching prey.

I watched in fascination as a tiny shrimp became entangled in a sticky frond and was then wrapped up by several other fronds before being reeled down towards the "skin" of the starfish.

Here, in some *Alien*-like process, the shrimp was absorbed, tail first, into the skin. Freakishly, its large eyes were the last part to be absorbed.

Was this some unusual type of feeding pattern I had not heard of before? I knew that starfish can be voracious predators that feed in several different ways.

The mouth is centrally placed beneath it, where it is protected, and the digestive system covers not only the mouth but also part of the arms.

A starfish will catch its prey, very often a crustacean, wrapping its powerful arms around it to break the shell.

It will then push its stomach out of its body and eat the contents, partially digesting it before the stomach is drawn back into the body.

In this way, it can consume prey much larger than its mouth.

All this activity takes place beneath the body, however, and not on top or through the skin. Watching this strange behaviour made me very curious, and keen to find out what was going on.

I asked the dive-guides. None of them knew for sure what was happening, but they all agreed that it seemed a very different way for starfish to eat.

OVER THE NEXT FEW days of diving in Anilao in the Philippines I kept my eye out for more starfish. Spotting lots of bright blue *Linckia*, I examined them to see if they too fed this way, but they didn't.

Eventually I found another starfish similar to the first,

covered in the white fronds. This time I had a macro lens on, so I settled in to watch in the hope of capturing an example of this behaviour.

Sure enough, after a few minutes a tiny shrimp, carried by the slight current, swam into the path of the starfish.

Very quickly the fronds seemed to reach out and catch the shrimp, quickly rolling it up as if it was a body being rolled into a carpet for Mafia-type disposal.

Retracting the fronds, the shrimp was slowly pulled back towards the body, where a globule of skin seemed to envelope it.

It was quite distressing to see the shrimp's eyes looking at me as it gradually disappeared.

Finally the eyes too were enveloped, and I could only think that the shrimp was being suffocated to death.

ONCE BACK in the UK reviewing my images, I decided to do some more research. I contacted several marine biologists, but none of them had seen the behaviour before, or could offer any type of explanation.

After weeks of research, I finally stumbled on something that amazed me. It seemed it was not the starfish itself that was feeding, but a type of benthic *Ctenophora* that was living communally with it.

Ctenophora are comb jellyfish and these examples, called *Platyctenida*, are the only benthic, or bottom-dwelling, sedentary comb jellyfish group in the range.

Normally comb jellies are seen in the water column around the world, pulsating and trailing long tentacles behind them. They are named for their unique feature of plates of giant fused cilia, known as combs, which run in eight rows up and down their bodies.

Sometimes these combs generate a psychedelic display of rainbow colours, when reflected light is scattered in different directions by the moving cilia.

These ancient animals are thought to have roamed the oceans for at least 500 million years. With sizes up to 15cm, *Ctenophora* have flattened, oval bodies and look very much like

nudibranchs or flatworms. In fact they are often mistaken for such animals, as all but one species of *Platyctenida* lack the profusion of tentacles I had witnessed.

Some have no visible tentacles, only pores along the back, and most have only two tentacles, with branching side tentacles.

Being cryptically coloured, they are normally fairly well camouflaged, blending in well on the rocks, algae and soft coral on which they usually live.

They use their mouth as a muscular foot to move onto subjects and cling to them, living symbiotically with their host.

Thought to be asexual, they can self-fertilise, so populations can grow quite fast.

I was surprised by this, because they seem to have been discovered only around 1999, and are rarely reported. Perhaps this is because they are so often mistaken for flatworms.

Another theory is that they are very fragile because they don't have to endure rough coastal waters. Many are so fragile that they cannot be collected for scientific research.

They are also food for more than 150 marine species.

SOME BUT NOT ALL comb jellies sting, but benthic *Ctenophora*, instead of releasing venom when their nematocysts fire on touch, release a sticky glue instead.

One species does use venom by recycling nematocysts from hydrozoans it eats. I was quite pleased not to be accidentally touched by a tentacle while I was photographing them, just in case this was a stinging type.

This starfish I had seen had been almost completely covered in the brightly coloured comb jellies, which were almost flat, so it was little wonder that I had mistaken them for starfish-skin.

Looking at other images of starfish I had taken on the same trip, I discovered one showing two starfish shrimp on the top of a starfish, with a side-branching comb jelly also on it!

Perhaps they are a lot more common than thought – it's just that we don't "see" them!

From now on, I'll keep a close look-out for starfish and see if they are carrying their deadly hitch-hikers.

BY SUFFOCATION



Graphic power

Racing Extinction (film)
directed by
Louie Psihoyos

'I FEEL LIKE THE WORLD is absolutely insane," says US filmmaker and diver Louis Psihoyos, surveying tens of thousands of severed shark fins set out in neat rows in Hong Kong.

For him the key to bringing the world to its senses before too many more wildlife species disappear forever is not to give in to feelings of hopelessness but to harness the power of imagery, whether in the form of film, stills or live projection.

Having watched many low-budget environmental films I find it interesting to see what can be done with a highly professional team on what was presumably a decent budget.

Racing Extinction is a beautifully shot and edited documentary that confronts us with the reality of what's happening to our planet at a few minutes to midnight.

This must be one of the most compelling environmental films to appear since *The End of the Line* – not surprising when you realise that it was Psihoyos who directed the Oscar-winning *The Cove*, the film that informed the world about Japanese dolphin slaughter.

Racing Extinction is mainly, though not exclusively, concerned with the



underwater world as it struggles to cope with man's depredations and ocean acidification. We see what's happening through the eyes of people like Shawn Heinrichs and Paul Hilton, undercover activists who have already helped to bring about change, such as with Wild-Aid's successful anti-shark-finning campaign in China or the CITES manta-ray protection campaign.

We follow the investigators into the depressing illegal wildlife markets in China and Hong Kong and on a manta hunt in Indonesia that's painful to watch, but we are also offered reasons to believe that solutions remain in our hands even at this late stage.

A New York restaurant serving whale sushi is shut down by a lone activist; locations such as Islas Mujeres in Mexico show how it's possible to switch from profiting from dead sharks

to live ones; progress made in China is acknowledged.

And throughout there is plenty of spectacular underwater action to show what's at risk.

The power of imagery culminates in spectacular displays projected onto the buildings of New York City, masterminded by Travis Threlkel of Obscura Digital and underlining that in the end it's all about education and inspiration. "*The whole world is singing – but we've stopped listening*" is the message.

Psihoyos says he was horrified by the amount of energy that had to be expended in making a film about environmental protection, but if enough people get to see *Racing Extinction*, it will have been worth it.

Discovery Channel
90min, 2 December

CENTRE OF THE CENTRE

Anilao Biodiversity & Dive Guide
by Carlos Trabal



FLY TO MANILA, capital of the Philippines, and drive south for three hours and you come to a region called Anilao. According to Spanish diver Carlos Trabal, Anilao, together with Verde Island, is the "centre of the centre of the Coral Triangle" in terms of biodiversity.

Trabal has been diving Anilao for 22 years and he makes a good case for it in what is very much a promotional book, though no less useful for that. He runs a travel operation specialising in the Philippines and Palau but Anilao clearly holds a special place in his heart.

English is not his first language and this quickly becomes apparent as you read through the book, although in this case (and partly because there aren't that many words) this doesn't particularly get in the way of comprehension.

The first section is dedicated to a photo-guide to commonly encountered marine life, most of which comes into the macro/critter category, especially shrimps and nudibranchs.

The pictures, taken by a variety of mainly Spanish photographers, are a little smaller than I would have liked.

The picture quality is variable but generally adequate for recognition,

and the caption information is pretty much limited to name and maximum size. Too much space is devoted to individual photo credits, especially as these are all listed again in a separate section.

Much of the second half of the book covers 57 accessible dive-sites from Red Rock to Washing Machine, with helpful notes and map positions on each one. I particularly liked the distinctive pen-and-wash site sketches, a collaboration between Trabal and an unnamed Filipino artist.

If I was heading to Anilao – and I guess most macro photographers would welcome that chance – this book would be a useful companion, especially for the dive-site profiles.

Trabal Publishing
ISBN: 9786219527002
anilaobiodiversityanddiveguide.com
Hardback, 286pp, 150 pesos
(£24.50 approx)

PAPERBACK BANKER

The World's Best Tropical Dive Destinations
by Lawson Wood



We reviewed the hardback when it came out in 2012, and pronounced it a beautifully produced overview of diving hot-spots in the Red Sea, Caribbean and Indian and Pacific Oceans covering 275 dive-sites – far from the most original concept, but based on genuine personal experience and illustrated by Wood's consistently good photographs.

And it has proved popular, according to our monitoring of the best-selling diving books. Now it's out in soft covers, and all the same observations apply – if you enjoy browsing for destination ideas, this book may well work for you.

John Beaufoy Publishing
ISBN: 9781909612662
Softback, 208pp, £16.44

Reviews by Steve Weinman

TOP 10 BEST-SELLING DIVING BOOKS

as listed by www.amazon.co.uk (26 October, 2015)

1. *Fifty Places to Dive Before You Die*, by Chris Santella
2. *The Darkness Below*, by Rod Macdonald
3. *Fifty Places to Dive Before You Die*, by Chris Santella (Kindle)
4. *Dive Maldives: A Guide to the Maldives Archipelago*, by Tim Godfrey
5. *Dive: The World's Best Diving Destinations*, by Lawson Wood
6. *The Essential Underwater Guide to North Wales: Barmouth to South Stack*, by Chris Holden
7. *Manual Of Freediving: Underwater On A Single Breath*, by Umberto Pelizzari & Stefano Tovaglieri
8. *Scuba Confidential: An Insider's Guide to Becoming a Better Diver*, by Simon Pridmore
9. *The Darkness Below*, by Rod Macdonald (Kindle)
10. *The Silent World*, by Jacques Cousteau



Monthly HALLS

'BLACK BOX THINKING COULD SAVE DIVING LIVES'

B LACK BOX THINKING – the title of a book, but also the name of a mindset. Let's talk about one, and then take a long, hard look at the other and how it applies to our world as divers.

The book is written by Matthew Syed, recently published as a follow-up to his excellent first book *Bounce*. Both of these publications have real resonance for us as divers, applying to all levels of expertise and training.

Bounce essentially analyses the importance of practice, and how to utilise it properly to create world-class performance.

There has been a lot of discussion in the media about the mythical 10,000-hour point – the perceived wisdom being that if you hit this many hours of practice/training, you will perform at truly remarkable levels.

Bounce explores this theory, but notes that it is actually the quality of the training that is more important than the duration. Anyway, it's a great book, one that every diver, and indeed anyone who wants to get on in life, should read.

But "black box thinking" has more sinister undertones. It explores the capacity of an organisation or institution to learn from its mistakes.

THIS GOES VERY DEEP indeed, looking at culture, attitude to error, hierarchy, data-collection and integrity of reporting procedures. At the core of the argument are two major industries.

The first is aviation (hence the title of the book). The book notes that in 1912, eight out of every 14 US Army pilots

died in crashes. That's slightly over half, which must have fairly got the adrenaline pumping as the engine coughed into life.

Fast-forward to 2013, and of the 3 billion passengers who took commercial flights, 210 died. That's a rate of one accident per 2.4 million flights. In short, aviation is obsessive about learning from its mistakes.

The second industry is healthcare.



The book reveals that in 1999 a landmark report noted that 44,000 to 98,000 Americans die each year from preventable medical errors.

Another report in 2013 set the number even higher – in the words of one expert: "The equivalent of two jumbo jets falling out of the sky every 24 hours."

So what is the difference between these two industries? Syed argues that it is all about culture.

In aviation there has always been a strong tradition of learning from

mistakes, of not apportioning blame, of reporting errors, of the whole organisation co-operating to try to make the next flight safer than the last.

In medicine, quite the opposite culture has applied. Hierarchies are well-defined, with no-one daring to question or defy surgeons who are deified within the profession.

A blame culture proliferates – it's not so much a case of finding out what went wrong, but who went wrong, so that the person can be censured.

As such, there is fear after every error, and a closed-shop mentality when the investigations begin.

Syed talks about an "open-loop" mentality – where there is feedback and learning from every mistake. And a "closed-loop" mentality, where all sorts of in-built attributes mean that an organisation simply never profits from errors.

And with those two wonderfully apposite terms, we come, of course, to diving. Do we as an industry learn from our mistakes? I'm not sure we do.

We too operate along fairly hierarchical lines – the old, bold divers and the senior instructors are revered and perceived as flawless. We too look to apportion blame, frequently resulting in persecution (generally) and prosecution (frequently) of one individual if there is an incident.

We are an intensely peer-governed group – scorn and abuse often being the response to unwitting errors.

The anonymity of social media doesn't help this one jot (my feelings on this are well-documented. Plato wondered if an otherwise moral person would still be so if aware that no-one could identify them. Well, Plato old boy, wonder no more!).

IN A NUTSHELL, the question is this: are we more like the aviation industry or the medical industry?

I hesitate to say it, but I fear (despite the input of the Health & Safety Executive, and collation of annual incident reports by the British Sub-Aqua Club) that we still operate in a closed-loop world.

It is said that there are no new mistakes in diving, just old mistakes made by new people.

In terms of large-scale errors, ones that cost a great many lives each year, the same simply cannot be said of the aviation industry. We would benefit a great deal, I suggest, by adopting our own "black box thinking".

Season's greetings in Anda



A secluded location in the Philippines offers fine diving with a little twist of luxury, according to Bristol-based Dive Safari Asia.

Located on the eastern coastline of Bohol is secluded Anda province and family-run Amun Ini Resort, which we're told offers a personalised service and easy access to 20-plus dive-sites a

few minutes' boat ride away.

During the Christmas period you can expect clear skies, flat-calm surface conditions and diving free of crowds, says DSA. Amun Ini has its own beach and a house reef where you can find mandarinfish, frogfish and ghost pipefish. The reef continues along the coast for more than three

miles of overhangs and caverns, with white-sand muck-diving sites beyond.

The Carmona family also plan to provide some festival atmosphere over the Christmas period. A 10-night full-board stay, 12 dives and airport transfers costs £1755pp, two sharing. Flights can be arranged on request.

► www.divesafariasia.com



A Regal Yuletide



MALCOLM NOBBS

Regaldiv has some special offers on dive-trips over the Christmas and New Year period. One is a Maldives liveaboard escape aboard *Ari Queen*, with a flexible seven-night itinerary covering the central atolls, including Ari.

Whitetip, grey and whale sharks, manta rays and turtles are on the wishlist and prices for Christmas departures start from £1799pp, including flights, which according to Regaldiv amounts to a saving

of £193pp.

Or you could swap reindeer for camels with a Red Sea liveaboard trip on an Emperor Reefs & Wrecks northern itinerary. Departing from Hurghada, this seven-night *Asmaa* experience with flights costs from £859pp in the festive season (a £95pp saving).

Caribbean diving enthusiasts are invited to see in the New Year at Nabucco's Resort Speyside Inn in Tobago, offering more than 20 excellent dive-sites a few minutes' boat-ride out. New Year prices start from £1125pp including flights, transfers and seven nights' B&B twin-share (a £110pp saving).

► www.regaldiving.co.uk

12 days of Christmas

How about the Bahamas for your festive break? Dive Worldwide has a holiday idea based in Nassau, spending Christmas week exploring any of what it says add up to more than a thousand regular dive-sites, including reefs, wrecks, walls, blue holes, caves and the chance to dive with dolphins and sharks – which is where a visit to Stuart Cove's and its famous Shark Adventure comes in.

Prices start from £2345pp for seven nights' accommodation, BA flights and 12 boat dives, departing on 23 December.

For the nights before Christmas spent away, then home for a traditional festive season, Dive Worldwide's tip is Maldives liveaboard *Carpe Diem*.

Departing from Male with high hopes of whale shark and other encounters, it will explore North and South Male and Ari Atolls. The crew will select the best dive-sites for the time of year, such as manta-cleaning stations and drift-dive opportunities.

This trip departing on 18 December costs from £2795pp (two sharing) for seven nights' full board, Emirates flights, transfers and five and a half days' diving.

► www.diveworldwide.com



MARK EVANS



MALCOLM NOBBS

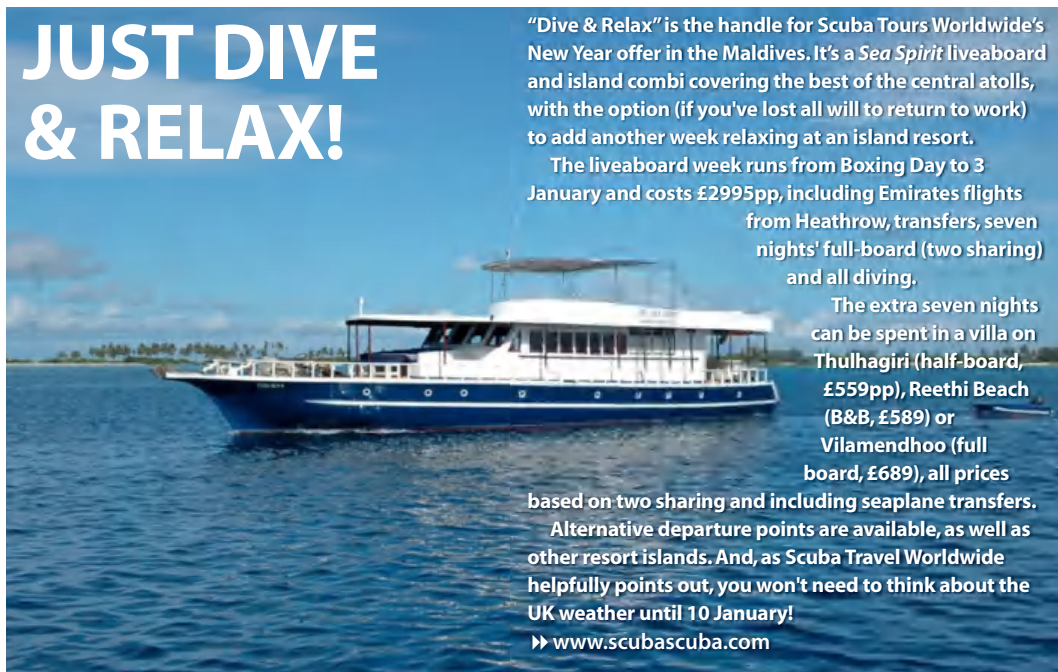
Red Sea getaway

Oonasdivers is another tour operator to have come up with Christmas & New Year getaway plans revolving around the Red Sea. From Christmas Day to 2 January you could be aboard *Emperor Asmaa* diving the South & St John's – £995pp gets you flights from London to Hurghada, transfers, seven nights' full board and six days' diving.

Or you could head to southern Egypt from 23-30 December and stay at the Southern Red Sea Dive Village at Marsa Nakari, in which case £1110 pp buys flights to Marsa Alam, transfers, seven nights' full board in a tent and five days' unlimited diving. Upgrades are available if you don't fancy camping out for Christmas.

► www.oonasdivers.com

JUST DIVE & RELAX!



"Dive & Relax" is the handle for Scuba Tours Worldwide's New Year offer in the Maldives. It's a *Sea Spirit* liveaboard and island combi covering the best of the central atolls, with the option (if you've lost all will to return to work) to add another week relaxing at an island resort.

The liveaboard week runs from Boxing Day to 3 January and costs £2995pp, including Emirates flights from Heathrow, transfers, seven nights' full-board (two sharing) and all diving.

The extra seven nights can be spent in a villa on Thulhagiri (half-board, £559pp), Reethi Beach (B&B, £589) or Vilamendhoo (full board, £689), all prices

based on two sharing and including seaplane transfers.

Alternative departure points are available, as well as other resort islands. And, as Scuba Travel Worldwide helpfully points out, you won't need to think about the UK weather until 10 January!

► www.scubascuba.com



HOT DEALS IN MEXICO

White sandy beaches, vibrant reefs and Christmas sunshine are promised by Pro-Dive Mexico, which would like you to celebrate the season at Mexican underwater hotspots and at resorts on the Riviera Maya & Cozumel. Its Stay & Dive packages start from US

\$1069pp per week

This price is for a stay at the 4* Occidental Allegro Cozumel "on the doorstep" of the marine park which it says hosts one of the world's top 10 reefs. You get seven nights on an all-inclusive meal plan (two sharing), 10 dives including

free nitrox, taxes, service charge and marine park fees.

Other options are the nearby 5* Occidental Grand Cozumel on the same terms from \$1309pp and, from \$1229pp, the Occidental Allegro Playacar near party-town Playa del Carmen. Here the 10

dives are at local reefs but can be upgraded to cenotes and Cozumel excursions for an additional fee.

The travel window is 19-26 December, and flights and transfers are not included.

► www.prodivemex.com/christmas-special

SPORTIF'S FREE GIFT

Give your partner or a friend a special Christmas present, suggests Sportif Dive Holidays, in the shape of a learn-to-dive package or a specialist diving course.

If you book one of its diving holiday packages for two people by 30 November it says you could qualify for a free dive-pack or course for your buddy at selected destinations in the Red Sea, Caribbean or Far East.

► www.sportifdive.co.uk



Escape into 2016



Diverse Travel reckons it has come up with the perfect New Year's escape in the form of seven nights aboard *Emperor Elite* covering its South & St John's Red Sea itinerary from 1 January.

For flights from London, six days' diving, a twin cabin with full board including wine, transfers from Hurghada and fees, expect to pay £799pp.

► www.diversettravel.co.uk

WELL AND TRULY TESTED



All that tedious underwater video editing work reduced to a mere shake – can it be true? NIGEL WADE heads for the Red Sea with a TomTom Bandit by his side

ACTION CAMERA TOMTOM BANDIT

THOSE LITTLE RECTANGULAR BOXES

seem to be everywhere – fixed to motorcycle helmets, stuck to car dashboards, strapped on bicycle handlebars and placed on the end of those ubiquitous selfie-sticks. They're also very popular with divers.

Go on any group diving trip and at least half of the participants have an action cam, recording their adventures both above and below the waves to share with friends and family or the masses on social-media sites.

In recent years the GoPro has reigned supreme, with other models providing competition. Now satellite navigation giant TomTom has joined the market with its Bandit action cam, which it reckons is a bit different to other cameras, and it sent me one to try.

The Camera

TomTom tells me that the Bandit is the first camera to come with a built-in media server, to eliminate the need to download footage before being able to edit it.

"We took a simple but radical approach to solving the editing problem," says TomTom's lead engineer Slobodan Stanisic. "With existing action cameras you first need to download gigabytes of footage to a powerful PC, a time-

consuming process. Then you need to find the highlights, put together a story and format it.

"Instead, we've designed a camera where the footage is processed on the camera itself, making the editing process far easier and much faster."

The Bandit achieves this with in-camera motion and GPS sensors to automatically find and tag exciting moments, based on factors such as speed, altitude, G-force, acceleration and heart rate. Highlights can also be tagged manually with a tagging button on the camera or by remote control.

The Bandit works with a smartphone or tablet app and includes a super-fast viewfinder. Footage can be reviewed instantly by using the app assisted by the built-in media server.

In Editing mode, a simple shake of the smartphone instantly creates an edited movie. Users can then make changes and add music

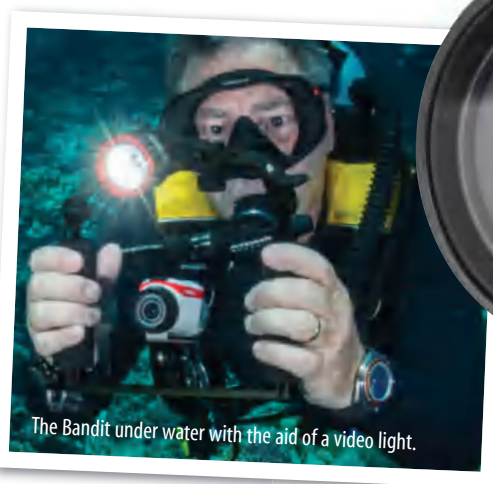
and overlays of favourite metrics, such as speed, before sharing their footage.

The Design

The TomTom Bandit Action Camera uses a high-end 16MP CMOS sensor and a powerful processing engine. Video can be captured at 1080p30, 1080p60, 720p60 and 720p120 or Cinematic at 2.7k30 or 4k15.

Shooting modes include Slow Motion, Time Lapse and Single or Burst Stills at 16Mb at up to 10-second intervals. Connection to either smart devices or computers is achieved via wi-fi, Bluetooth Smart or USB3.0.

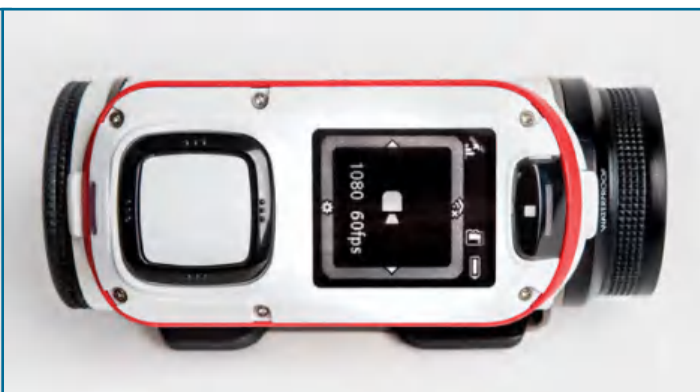
The camera and housing can be depth-rated to 50m with the addition of the Bandit's lens-cap accessory. A squeeze-to-release steel-ring system allows it to be attached quickly to TomTom's range of base mounts and



The Bandit under water with the aid of a video light.



Bandit Batt-Stick and dive lens removed from the main body.



The display on the Bandit – menus are accessed via the square game-pad switch.

accessories, and the barrel-shaped body swivels within the ring system to allow for adjustments in orientation wherever it is mounted.

Batt-Stick

The Bandit is powered by an integrated battery housed in what is known as a Batt-Stick, which combines the 1900MAH li-ion battery, micro SD card and SuperSpeed USB 3.0.

It plugs directly into a computer via the USB to charge and download footage, removing the need for additional cables or adaptors. The USB connection is also compatible with mains chargers used for phones or tablets.

Additional Batt-Sticks can be purchased so that loss of power during a full day's diving becomes a thing of the past. A power cable available for extended time-lapse shooting connects to the rear of the Batt-Stick via corrosion-proof gold-plated terminals.

The Batt-Stick is easily removed from the Bandit body by depressing a small catch and turning it anti-clockwise.

Display and Controls

The Bandit has a single multi-functional LCD display. Menu settings covering all aspects of the camera's settings can be easily accessed and scrolled through by using a multi-directional game-pad-style button below the display.

Two other push-buttons are used to turn on the device, start and stop recording and manually bookmark the footage.

The rear button is integrated into the Batt-Stick and indicates the battery power state using four tiny LEDs when the stick is removed from the camera body.

In Use

I used TomTom's dedicated GoPro mount adaptor to secure the Bandit onto a Big Blue GoPro base-tray with arms and ball-mounts, giving me a stable platform from which to shoot. With the Video Shooting mode set to 1080p 60, I took the camera under water on the house reef at the Egyptian resort of Soma Bay.

There was plenty to shoot, with anemonefish and glassfish among the usual Red Sea suspects.

The battery life was very impressive, with the stated duration from a full charge being three hours, although at the higher end recording modes (cinematic 4k and 2.7k) the battery didn't last as long but still gave more than 2.5 hours.

While switched on but not recording the camera goes into Standby mode, and consumes very little power in the process.

Shooting couldn't have been easier. A single push of the rear button started the camera, and flashing red lights at both ends of the body indicated that recording was taking place.

The long battery life and editing capabilities meant that I could shoot the whole dive, bookmarking the important bits along the way, in the knowledge that when I connected the camera to my iPhone I could instantly edit the

footage and get rid of the boring stuff, cutting straight to the action with just a shake.

Once on land I opened the dedicated Bandit app, and the footage was instantly displayed in the library. I shook the phone to edit the film, added music from my iTunes library and could instantly share the results with onlookers.

I decided not to download the footage on social-media sites because of the music's royalty rights.

Footage needs to be transferred to a computer to store it, but this is a simple task using the USB connection on the Batt-Stick.

Once done, a multitude of editing suites can be used to produce a final polished movie.

Conclusion

This action cam is a joy to use – it's simple and almost idiot-proof (a good thing in my case).

The flashing red lights were a godsend, letting me know that it was actually recording, and negating the disappointment of thinking I'd captured some amazing encounters only to later find that it hadn't been switched on (we've all done it).

I found the camera's close-focus ability to be limiting, however. The minimum focus distance was around the 45cm mark, making wide-angle

macro shooting disappointing.

The mount system was secure and quick to use, with the ring system allowing a fast change in orientation. TomTom's addition of a GoPro converter is genius, with the plethora of mount accessories that can be interchanged increasing the Bandit's versatility.

SPECS

PRICE » £299, dive lens cover £30, spare Batt-Stick £50.

MATERIAL » Advanced polymers

POWER » 1900MAH integrated rechargeable li-ion battery.

CONNECTIVITY » USB 3.0, wi-fi, Bluetooth Smart

EDITING » Instantly via the Bandit app

BATTERY LIFE » Up to 3 hours

SIZE » 95 x 50mm diameter

WEIGHT » 192g with Batt-Stick and dive lens

DEPTH RATING » 50m with dive lens cover

MOUNTING » Quick-release ring system

CONTACT » www.tomtom.com

DIVER GUIDE ★★★★★★☆☆

The addition of a powerful video light enhanced the footage, bringing out the natural colours and reducing the cyan cast we all see under water without artificial light. The Bandit did seem to struggle initially with blown-out highlights as the lens iris squeezed down to compensate for brighter light, but after that the footage looked natural and well-exposed.

I'm a bit of a muppet in the video-shooting department – my expertise lies with stills photography. I did, however, for the first time record some movies that I was proud to share, and that alone pushes this little red and white Bandit to the top of my wanted list. ■



The Bandit mounted on a Big Blue GoPro frame provided stability.



The Batt-Stick battery gauge.

WETSUIT

PINNACLE TEMPO

3MM MERINO

A YEAR AGO I HAD MY MUCH-LOVED AND well-used Pinnacle wetsuit stolen while on a trip to St Vincent. The Caribbean island's waters were actually warm enough to dive without a wetsuit but nonetheless my heart was broken, because that suit had been a perfect fit and a perfect partner for warmwater diving.

I contacted the UK distributor for the US-made suits and it sent me an upgraded version in a bid to stop me mourning my loss.

This one is the Tempo, and I've been diving with it in another Caribbean destination, St Lucia, and on a few trips to Egypt's Red Sea.

The Design

The Tempo is made from Elastiprene titanium-lined neoprene which features the addition of Merino wool panels to add "up to 35% more insulating power", according to Pinnacle. The Tempo comes in 3, 5 and 7mm thicknesses; the version I took on test was the 3mm.

The suit has a rear-zip entry with a 5mm spine flap and smoothskin seal to provide thermal protection and reduce water movement.

The rear YKK zip is made from heavy-duty plastics and is equipped with a long webbing pull-leash with a hook-and-loop tie-down.

The Tempo's seams are double-glued and blind-stitched with stress discs applied at the internal seam intersections for added strength.

Smoothskin chimney ankle and O-ring wrist-seals create barriers to water entry, and the ankles have 20cm zipper seals to aid donning and doffing.

Moulded rubber shoulder-panels help to hold a BC in place and pad the wearer's shoulders. These prevent suit wear, as do the multi-panel rubber pads at the knees.

The suit comes in black with grey under-arms, contrasting stitching and blue-and-white screen-printed accents and livery.

The Pinnacle range includes the Siren, which

is the female version of the Tempo, and the suits come in 13 male and 10 female sizes, including intermediate short and tall versions.

Under Water

The Elastiprene used for the main body of the Tempo really is stretchy – so much so that it was able to conform to my middle-age spread without restricting movement or making me feel as if I was being constricted by a boa.

The Merino wool panels at the chest and back felt soft to the touch, and added to the overall comfort of the suit.

The Merino also dried quickly and I'm told it will resist becoming odorous, thanks to the properties of the lanolin in the wool.

The ankle zips made it easy to get the suit on and even easier to tuck the high tops of my dive-boots inside the legs. This aided the water-sealing properties and kept a low profile around my lower extremities.

The neck-seal was soft where it needed to be, and didn't rub my water-softened skin during or after multiple dives.

I lent the suit to dive-guide Ahmed on a recent trip to Soma Bay in the Egyptian Red Sea. His task was to pose for some photos but also to give me a second opinion, and it says it all that I had to prise the suit away from him and hide it in my dive-bag so that I could wear it the following day.

The suit has lasted well over the course of six months and about 100 hours under water, showing few if any signs of wear and tear.

The 3mm neoprene has compressed a tiny bit, but that's to be expected.

What has particularly impressed me is the lack of Velcro rash from my BC and the absence of wear around the waist from my weight-belt or on the backside from numerous hardboat and RIB rides.

On the thermal front the Tempo proved to be excellent. The addition of the Merino panels certainly made for warmer dives, and this was very noticeable on my Red Sea excursions, diving in this 3mm suit where the norm would be 5mm.



Nigel Wade had to prise the Pinnacle Tempo away from Ahmed after this photo shoot!

SPECS

PRICE ➤ £250

TYPE ➤ Back-zip, full suit

MATERIAL ➤ Elastiprene neoprene with Merino wool lining

COLOURS ➤ Black with grey under-arms, blue/white accents.

KNEEPADS ➤ Multi-panel rubber

POCKETS ➤ None

SIZES ➤ Tempo, 13 with 3 short and 3 tall options. Siren, 10 with 3 short and 1 tall

CONTACT ➤ www.sea-sea.com

DIVER GUIDE ★★★★★★★★★★

Conclusion

I have to tell you (again) that I'm a huge fan of Pinnacle products; the suit I lost was like that favourite T-shirt you always reach for in the wardrobe; the one that gets better with age and use and to some extent defines you.

Well, that's what my old Pinnacle was like. This new Tempo with its snappy but subtle colour scheme, super-soft Merino wool and ultra stretchy Elastiprene has made me get over my loss and put the smile back on my face.

The fact that I parted with some hard-earned cash to own it should explain just how much I liked it. The king is dead – long live the king. ■

LIGHT

FIT PRO 2500 FLARE VIDEO



FOLLOWING ON FROM OUR GROUP TEST of lights (*Stop Stumblin' in the Dark*, October), I put a high-end single-function light through the **DIVER Tests** treadmill. This month, to balance the equation, I've chosen a true all-rounder to test. This one has it all – wide angle, spot, red and ultra-violet, plus it flashes as either a strobe or, in an emergency, SOS.

I took the Pro 2500 Flare Video Light to Egypt for some intensive diving, capturing underwater stills and video to see how it performed.

The Specs

The FIT Pro 2500 Flare Video light (from now on I'll refer to it simply as the Flare) is a compact torch designed to be mounted on either a camera arm-and-ball system or to be hand-held. It has a hard-anodised aluminium body that screws apart behind the head to give access to its single 3.7V lithium-ion rechargeable battery.

The battery is charged out of the lamp body in its dedicated cradle via a USB lead and also needs to be removed while travelling by air to comply with airline regulations.

The light modes are delivered by a variety of LEDs. The Flood (wide-angle) mode uses four white CREM XM-L U2 LEDs to give a 120° beam at the Flare's maximum output of 2500 lumens, while the 15° spot beam uses a single LED of the same spec to give an output of 1000 lumens.

To assist digital camera focus systems in poor

ambient lighting, a red light is integrated into the Flare. The red LEDs are twin CREE XP-E N3 delivering 200 lumens through a 120° beam.

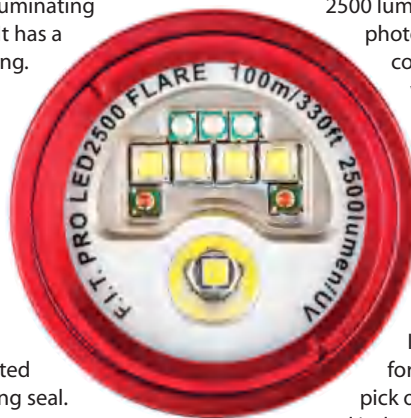
That's not all – the light has more functions for the discerning underwater photographer. The first is an ultra-violet light delivered through a 120° beam and three 9W UV LEDs delivering UV light at a wavelength of 365nm.

To finish off, the Flare has two flashing modes, one a fast-pulsing strobe light, the other an SOS function to alert search parties. Both flashing modes are delivered via the single white spot LED through its narrow beam.

Battery status is indicated by a coloured mini LED system subtly illuminating the twin control buttons. It has a built-in low-battery warning.

The Flare's clever electronic circuitry also lowers the brightness if the lamp body's temperature is too high, and it also has a wrong battery electrode protection function.

The Flare measures 125 x 50mm diameter, weighs in at 410g and is depth-rated to 100m via a double O-ring seal.



60 minutes to 5 hours depending on the light mode. I haven't had a chance to test these in real time but the light was good for two dives of around 45 minutes each, scrolling through the modes on reduced output and using full power only when required.

I thought the light output was significant – 2500 lumens is more than most photographers will ever need. Of course, diehard videographers will say that 25,000 is better suited to their cinematic ultra-wide footage, but the Flare lit my action-cam footage very well, delivering even coverage with no sign of hotspots. The red light is a function I can't be without nowadays. It's perfect for adding contrast for my camera's focus system to pick out, it doesn't scare the fish and it doesn't destroy night vision.

The Flare's red light was bright, gave an even beam and could be adjusted – perfect.

The UV light was available only on a single power level. It was powerful enough to show fluorescence on night dives, causing the little reef critters, coral polyps and some fish to glow unnaturally in the dark, but the UV light output was too low to allow my camera to record it.

Conclusion

There are purpose-built tools with a single function such as prime camera lenses, invariably the best performers. Then there are multi-function tools that seem to be a bit of a compromise as they become jacks of all trades.

Then there are well-designed, well-built multi-tools that excel in all their functions. The FIT Pro 2500 Flare falls into the latter category – it really is a multi-purpose light, but none of its individual functions has been compromised (with the possible exception of the UV mode).

The batteries can be fully charged from empty in four hours, and if that's not quick enough spares can be purchased so that you always have power to hand – an advantage over lights with integrated power supplies.

The Flare seems to be at the top of its game, even in today's fast-evolving world of next-generation LED lights. ■

SPECS

PRICE ► £415

FUNCTIONS ► Wide-Angle Video, Spot, Red, UV, SOS

MAX OUTPUT ► 2500 lm

POWER LEVELS ► Three for Wide, Spot, Red. One for UV, SOS

BEAM ANGLE ► Wide, Red, UV 120°. Spot 15°

COLOUR TEMPERATURE ► 5700-7000°K

BATTERY ► Rechargeable li-ion, remove for charging

BATTERY LEVEL INDICATOR ► Green, yellow, red, flashing red

STATED BURNTIMES ► At full power, wide 1hr, spot 2.5hr, red 5hr, UV 5hr

SWITCHING ► Twin buttons with battery indicator.

TRAVEL LOCK ► Battery removal

MATERIAL ► Hard anodised aero-grade aluminium alloy.

SIZE & WEIGHT ► 125 x 50mm diameter, 220g

DEPTH RATING ► 100m

CONTACT ► www.uwvisions.com

DIVER GUIDE ★★★★★★☆☆

In Use

The plethora of options gave me everything I needed when I needed it. I didn't use the SOS facility but it's reassuring to have it available.

The Flare felt extremely robust with its all-metal construction, but this makes it negatively buoyant in the water, prompting the feeling that one slip and it will sink into the abyss like a stone. You can however attach a lanyard at the rear of the body to avoid the unthinkable.

The two-button system was simple to figure out and use. The left button switches the light on and off with single long pushes, and is then used to scroll through the light modes using short pushes. The right button adjusts the power output in three descending levels for the white and red spot or flood beams.

The UV light had no adjustment, and only one of the three UV LEDs lit on the model I tested (I'm not sure if this was a fault – I'm checking with the supplier).

The battery status lights gave a seemingly accurate indication of power reserves and were easy to see. This was assisted by the clever mounting ring permanently attached to the lamp's body. It rotates, allowing the buttons to be exactly where you can access them no matter what the orientation of the mount.

Claimed burntimes from the maker are from

NEW BUT UNTESTED

The latest kit to hit the dive shops

Cressi ARA EBS Fins >>>>

Italian dive-gear maker Cressi says it has updated its Frog fins using the latest technology – in fact its ARA EBS models are a 2015 version of the old-school Master Frog.

Cressi says it has improved the blade geometry and developed a wider foot-pocket to suit modern dive-boots, as well as adding its patented elastic bungee system (EBS). The fins come in two versions. The HD has a stiffer blade for maximum propulsion and is available only in black, while the softer-bladed SB comes in yellow, blue or silver, but both cost £99.

>> www.cressi.co.uk



Northern Diver Cortex Red Edition Drysuit >>>>

The latest Cortex drysuit, the Red Edition, has a Cordura outer layer with an individual cut. It is fitted with soft neoprene neck- and wrist-seals and has a BDM rear-entry zip with a protective flap, Kevlar kneepads with an anti-slip coating and hard-soled boots. The suit has zipped cargo pockets – one is fitted with a knife-sheath and the other is a bellows pocket. Also supplied are a 5mm neoprene hood, carry bag, lp hose and maintenance kit. The Cortex Red Edition is priced at £820.

>> www.ndiver.com

Aqua Lung Fusion Plus Base Layer <<<<

Aqua Lung has released a new two-piece base layer using fabric made from recycled coffee grounds. This environmentally friendly S-Cafe material is said to have natural wicking and odour-absorbing properties: "The average cup of coffee uses just 0.2% of the coffee bean, with the remaining 99.8% becoming coffee grounds. By recycling the used coffee grounds into yarn, the once wasted 99.8% is put to good use". The Fusion Plus base layer features include thumb-loops for ease of donning, a hidden hip-pocket and, in the women's version, a zippered side-pocket. Available in sizes from XS to 4XL for men and XS to 2XL for women, the tops and bottoms are sold separately and cost £55 each.

>> www.aqualung.com/uk



FIX Neo Premium 2200 DX Video Light >>>>

The latest light from US-based FIX carries the Premium label, designating a colour rendering index of 95 (CRI95). The light is said to deliver 2200 lumens with a 100° arcing beam at a colour temperature of 4000K. A single swappable 3400 mAh li-ion battery with a claimed recharge time of 2.5 hours supplies the power. There is an LCD data screen, and the light is depth-rated to 100m, weighs 355g and measures 55 x 60 x 115mm. Expect to pay US \$799.

>> www.fixneo.com



Nauticam Wet Wide Lens (WWL) <<<<

Camera-housing maker Nauticam claims to offer the best image quality of any wide wet lens on the market with its latest computer-aided design WWL. Adding the WWL to underwater camera systems increases the field of view to 130° with a 28mm lens and it is said to suit the latest generation of large-sensor compact and mirrorless cameras with mid-range zooms, plus the Sony A7 system with a 28mm fixed prime lens. The Nauticam Wet Wide Lens is supplied with a neoprene cover and protective case for £750.

➔ www.nauticam.co.uk



O'Three Extreme Semi 7mm Hood >>>>

Portland-based exposure-suit maker O'Three says that longer dives and the accessibility of coldwater diving have meant that a 7mm hood is no longer seen as a purchase for one-time use, and has released this latest addition to its hood range. According to O'Three, 7mm hoods no longer have to be stiff and claustrophobic. The Extreme Semi 7mm is constructed from Super Supple neoprene and features glued and blind-stitched seams, an Ultra Soft neck, thermal interior, a contour-hugging Glideskin face-seal and an Airprene vent. The 7mm hood costs just under £40.

➔ www.othree.co.uk



RATIO iDive Wristwatch Computers >>>>

Liquid Sports has added the latest in the RATIO iDive range of Italian wristwatch-style computers to its UK portfolio. Models feature a full-matrix screen, rechargeable batteries, 3D compass, and apps including chronograph, gas-analyser, pitch-and-roll, moon phase and manometer, all boasting a depth-rating of 220m. The range includes the iDive Easy, Deep, Tech and Reb (rebreather) models. They come in either watch or jewel versions, the latter having Swarovski crystals placed around the outer edge of the face. The Ratio iDive range uses Bühlmann ZHL-16 or VPM-B algorithms and prices range from £375 for the Easy to £899 for the Reb Jewel.

➔ www.liquidsports.co.uk

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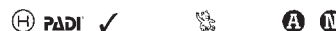


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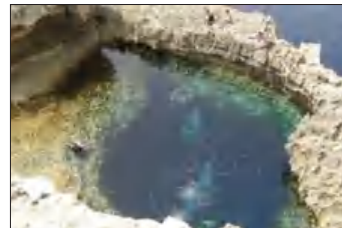
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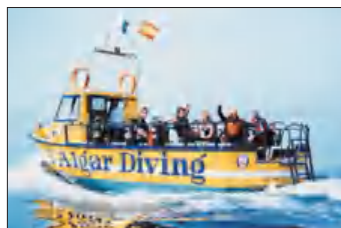
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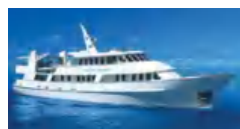
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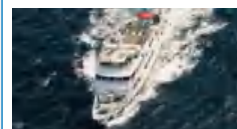
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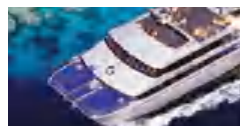
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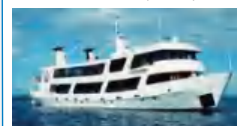
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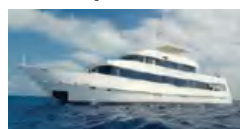
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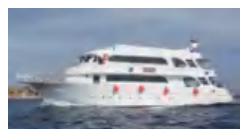
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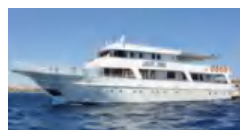
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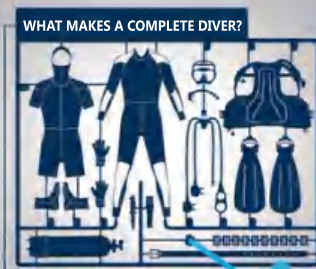
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Ellon Sub Aqua Club, Aberdeenshire, welcomes newcomers and experienced divers. We dive year round and meet on Thursday evenings. Contact www.ellonsubaquaclub.co.uk (48203)

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Haslemere Sub Aqua Club based at Haslemere, Surrey, friendly active club welcomes new and experienced divers, offers full training. Meets Thursday nights. Contact Mike 07754 968297. (63392)

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Hereford Sub Aqua Club, is looking for new members. Regular diving off the Pembrokeshire coast on own RIBs. Training and social nights. Contact: rusaqua@googlemail.com (58477)

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Teddington SAC at Teddington Pool, Wednesdays 21.00. Training and good social side. Diving near and far. Tel: 07951 064448 or email: deepexplorer@blueyonder.co.uk (63491)

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Photography etiquette -what is acceptable?

When a kid showed **LISA COLLINS** his 800-odd shots of the same disturbed-looking critter, did he really expect a pat on the back?

ECONOMICALLY VIABLE technology has made underwater photography – once a fairly exclusive, expensive and luxurious pastime – accessible to almost everyone. And with this development comes a major problem.

Before marine conservation became such a hot topic, many professional underwater photographers would freely admit to overlooking damage they might cause by lying on the reef, moving subjects for better angles and backgrounds, or breaking off bits of coral that got in the way. Their numbers were small, however, compared to the multitudes of photographers in the ocean now.

Over the years, attitudes have largely changed. Many old-school underwater photographers have relearned their skills to achieve better buoyancy, and have become more sensitive to marine-life damage.

Some have done a complete about-turn, and are ready to admonish anyone seen causing damage. Their behaviour under water is often emulated by less experienced divers and photographers.

I have heard comments about this “famous” underwater photographer moving subjects, and that one bumbling over the reef without a care. These, I would imagine, are likely to be isolated incidents when the famous one was caught unawares at the wrong time. I am sure there are also divers who would be glad to comment on my own buoyancy-control efforts!

I would hope that most “celebrity” photographers take as much care as possible, without manipulating or unduly stressing subjects or causing years’ worth of damage to coral with uncontrolled fin-kicks, but nobody is infallible.

IN RECENT YEARS I have made a conscious study of acceptable underwater photography behaviour by location. I don’t just mean behaviour of photographers but of their associates, such as dive-guides, boat captains and other divers in the group.

I have noticed more and more conservation awareness among divers in general. However, I have also noticed an alarming number of photographs, often posted on social media, in which subjects have been manipulated into positions more conducive to a pleasing composition.

Unnatural behaviour of the subjects is quite evident in some images. There are always going to be those lucky behavioural shots, in which a seahorse or octopus is free-swimming, a nudibranch has climbed on top of a pinnacle, a shrimp is posing

perfectly on top of a sea cucumber, or a blue-ringed octopus is vibrantly flashing its neon rings. But when you see these time and again, as well as subjects such as crinoid shrimps, usually perfectly camouflaged within the arms of a crinoid but set against unnatural backgrounds, you realise that manipulation on a large scale is going on.

What do other photographers now regard as acceptable? As far as manipulation of a subject, many champion as little interference as possible. The slight rotation of a loose piece of rock on which a nudibranch is perching, or the gentle removal of a bit of coral debris from the sand is barely intrusive.

Most divers will have met friendly dive-guides who want to locate the best subjects possible. Many have years of experience diving with particular subjects and know their behaviour.



A lucky ‘natural-behaviour’ picture of a swimming seahorse.

They may entice a mantis shrimp from its hole by dangling a shiny object over the top of it, or gently move the arms of a featherstar with a pointer to expose a glimpse of crinoid shrimp.

Although not acceptable to everyone, these actions generally indicate compassion for the subject. I know of many dive-guides who pride themselves on showing divers subjects without stressing the animals, and telling off anyone untrained or inexperienced who tries to copy them.

There are, however, an alarming number of guides and divers who think nothing of plonking a nudibranch down in a more suitable position, or pulling the tail of a nurse shark or moray eel to make it swim or show its teeth.

Stressing animals until they display extreme behaviours, such as constant provoking of a frogfish until it “yawns” over and over again, seems to be becoming quite prevalent as some photographers compete to get the money shot.

On a recent workshop I ran, I was asked if a very

young but talented underwater photographer who was being mentored by a group of dive professionals could join my group. He had won awards already and he was only 13, so of course I agreed.

Once under water, I was horrified not only by his behaviour but by that of his mentors. It was clear that the praise this prodigy constantly received gave him the idea that he was entitled to manipulate subjects, prodding and poking them into position before taking multiple photos, prodding and poking again if the subject moved.

He would think nothing about barging in where other photographers were working if he felt he was missing out, either pushing into them or kicking up sand so that their photos would be ruined.

His mentors would go off picking up subjects and putting them against pre-selected photogenic backgrounds. Back on land I was shown photos of different subjects on the same background, while the young photographer bragged about taking 700-odd photos of this subject and 500-odd of that one.

He did have some amazing shots, and sadly the manipulation was not always evident.

AFTER THE SECOND DAY’S DIVING, I spoke with the boy’s mentors, his father and the boy himself about the importance of observing underwater-photography etiquette. My very first lecture at a workshop had stressed this.

I stressed that not touching the reef or subjects or manipulating them, maintaining good buoyancy, being polite around other photographers, keeping your distance, waiting your turn and not hogging subjects were key to becoming a good practitioner who others would respect and want to follow.

We show non-divers the wonders of the ocean, but if we don’t respect them ourselves, who will?

I could see, over the remaining days, that my talk had done some good, because the boy was watching his behaviour. I became concerned again, however, after the last dive of the week.


Our workshop group had been offered the chance of diving with a rare subject, but would have to pay a dive-guide a large sum to show us where it was.

As much as we wanted to see it, the bitter taste left by this demand decided us on not pursuing it.

The boy didn’t want to miss out, however. On his return, he tried to show me his 800-plus shots of this subject, many of which showed it displaying unnatural and stressed behaviour.

He did at least look slightly sheepish and guilty.

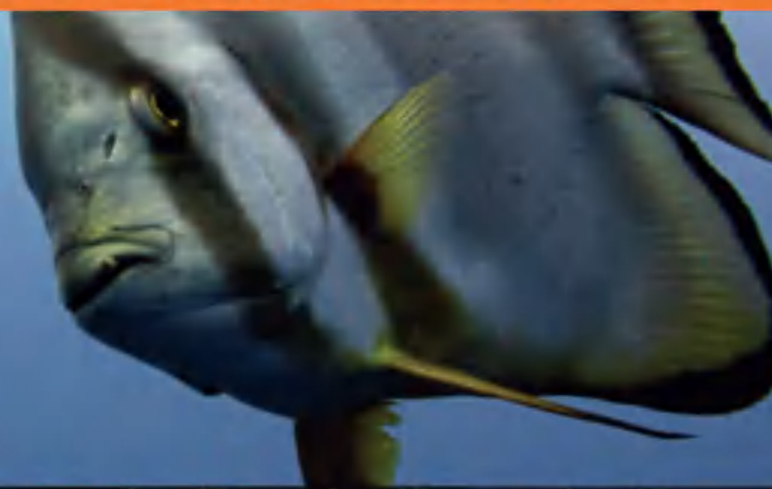
Come on – let’s man or woman up and do the right thing. Yes, share our sacred underwater world by taking photographs, but do it ethically and do all you can to protect it too.

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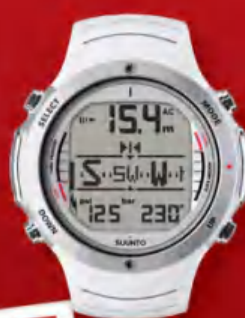
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